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FRANK ALLERTON:

An Autobiography.

BY

AUGUSTUS MONGREDIEN.

"Non ulla Musis pagina gratior,
Quam quæ severis ludicra jungere
Novit, fatigatamque nugis
Utilibus recreare mentem."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



London :

SAMUEL TINSLEY & CO.,

10 SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND.

1878.

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FRANK ALLERTON:

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

CHAPTER I.

BREREWOOD IS TRACKED TO THE SECRET SERVICE OFFICE.

THE next day Philip Centry returned to his home at the modest coffee-house in St. Martin's Lane. Before his arrival his sister (whom we will now call by her original name of Zillah) had learned from Mrs. Centry and Clarice enough of his present habits and views to frame a story and adopt a manner that should interest and conciliate him. In her story she inserted as much truth and as little falsehood as was consistent with her purpose, for it is only bunglers who resort to unnecessary lies; just as a skilful apothecary in compounding a narcotic avoids an overdose of the deadly drug.

And the impression respecting herself that she created on Philip's mind was none the less utterly deceptive.

From her account he was led to believe that after the death of the elder Allerton she had quite reformed ; that her marriage with a member of a poor but noble Italian family, Count Molina, had conferred on her many years of quiet unobtrusive happiness, only interrupted by the lamented demise of her excellent husband ; that on his death-bed his piety and zeal for the Holy Catholic Church had prompted him to exact from her a promise to devote her whole energies to the promotion of the cause of the Stuart princes who had honoured Molina with their friendship, and with whom the interests of Catholicism in England were so intimately bound up ; that, in fulfilment of such promise, she had a few months afterwards accepted a mission to London, where, in a private capacity, she was to watch and aid the Jacobite cause, and report on it to Cardinal Tencin at Paris ; and that, having a few days since been denounced to the English Government, she had sought safety in disguise and concealment.

“ I have now, dear Philip, told you all,” said she, in conclusion, “ it is for you to decide on my fate. If you fear lest harbouring me might compromise you, I will readily accept the alternative of learning. Come imprisonment or come death, I shall have done my duty to Holy Mother Church, and my martyrdom may prove an expiation for the sins of my early life ! ”

Philip Centry was a devout and zealous Catholic, as were his wife and daughter, and in a man of his ardent and energetic temperament belief was not a mere profession, but a vigorous tree, of which the roots sprang out of his very soul.

“ What do you take me for, sister,” said he, “ that you should imagine that I could abandon you in such a strait, incurred by you in such a cause ? No ! remain here as long as your necessities may require, and if you will tell me your plans I will assist you in them, if in my power. How did you discover my residence here ? ”

“ When in Paris I heard that you had with your wife emigrated to London under the name of Centry ; and I had only just succeeded in tracing you to this house, when the need

presented itself to seek shelter from you. As to my ulterior plans, they are still unsettled ; but my immediate object is to verify my suspicions as to the man whose treachery both to the cause and to myself has, I have every reason to believe, subjected me to the persecution of the Government."

"Do I know the person to whom your suspicions point?"

"I think not. His name is Martin Brerewood."

"He is unknown to me."

"He professed and was supposed to be an active partisan in the Stuart cause. But I have a strong notion that he is in communication with a Mr. Frampton, who is the Government bloodhound. He professed friendship for me, but I have a strong notion that it was he who informed against me. He professed some learning towards the true religion, but I have a strong notion that he is its bitterest enemy. Is not that a traitor worth unmasking?"

"He most certainly is."

"If I clearly ascertain and prove his guilt, ought such a caitiff to escape punishment?"

“No doubt well-deserved retribution will follow in some shape.”

“It must be made to follow.”

“Time enough to talk of that when his guilt is proved.”

“Be it so, Philip. My task now is to trace the shifts and windings of this intriguing knave, and to bring his treachery home to him. For three days I have watched the track that leads from Brerewood’s lodgings to Frampton’s office, and as it is nearly three o’clock I must be on the alert again to-day.”

“Why that particular hour?”

“He always had an appointment at about that time, and I cannot help fancying that it must have been with Frampton, who, being too busy an official to be accessible to any man at uncertain times, would naturally appoint a particular hour for each person. So adieu, Philip; many thanks. I shall return by the time your coffee-room closes.”

Opposite the house in Air Street in which Brerewood lodged stands a snuff-shop which was much frequented, and drove a considerable trade in that article, now in such universal use. The shelves groaned beneath the weight of

some forty or fifty large earthenware jars, each labelled in letters of gold with the name of the peculiar mixture it contained, besides at least as many other smaller ones bearing the name of the person under whose direction and for whose account each particular compound had been prepared. The tastes for snuff vary infinitely, but all could be suited out of the multifarious stores of Messrs. Fitton & Jay. There was no nose however fastidious which they could not supply with the exact amount of fragrancy or pungency that it required. The junior partner, Mr. Jay, was acknowledged to be the greatest connoisseur in snuff that England could boast of. People of sensitive olfactory nerves came up to London from Bristol and Exeter, York and Norwich, for the express purpose of consulting him, as invalids flock to London to consult an eminent physician.

His method of diagnosis was very simple.

"Which snuff do you least dislike?" he would ask.

"I now use," might answer the patient, "either Dutch carrotte or Brunswick mixture; but the former is too coarse and lacks flavour,

the latter too highly scented, too pungent, and makes my eyes water."

"Good!" says Mr. Jay, "I understand your case exactly. Take a seat."

Whereupon he unfolds a sheet of soft prepared parchment on a table, places on it certain varying quantities of snuff taken from four different jars, mixes them carefully together by means of a flat piece of ivory which they call a ductor, and then, filling a large tortoise-shell spoon with the compound, he confidently presents it for trial to the admiring customer. The latter takes two or three pinches, pronounces it perfect, and orders a certain quantity to be sent weekly to his seat in the country. The ingredients and their proportions are carefully noted in a book, and the recipe is known hereafter as "Mr. So-and-So's mixture." Another addition to the yearly profits of Messrs. Fitton & Jay! For my part, I am constant to my old preference for Rapé Noir, which is beginning to be known by the name of "Black Rappee," and which I predict will go down to posterity as the standard snuff of the civilized world, leaving Charley's favourite Tabac de la Reine and other similar perfumes, rather

than snuffs, to die a natural death after a few years' vogue.

But to return. This shop was so posted that any one at the counter could easily see the door of Mr. Brerewood's house, and Zillah, who, in male attire, and under the name of Mr. Dillon, of Jersey, had become a customer and given an order, used it as long as she could remain in the shop as a watch-tower whence she could observe the movements of the enemy should he sally forth. She was being favoured with a dissertation upon the relative merits of two snuffs between which she had appeared undecided, when her ear was struck by the sound of a voice which she fancied that she recognized. It was that of Lopps, to whom Charley and I had assigned the task of tracing the suspected connexion between Brerewood and the Secret Service Office, quite unaware that our missing countess had devoted herself to the same work. She had met Lopps once or twice for a few minutes at Philip Centry's house, and had been much amused at the evident jealousy he had exhibited at her (or, as it seemed, *his*) familiarity with Clarice. Lopps had been asking for two ounces of

returns. The shopman had informed him that they did not sell tobacco.

"Not sell tobacco!" cried Lopps. "Then what is it you do sell?"

"Snuff. We manufacture tobacco, not sell it."

"Where am I to get 'bacco, if not at a 'bacco-shop? I can't get it at the cheesemonger's!"

"It is not worth our while to keep the article. Our class of customers do not use it."

"Well, that is grand! But you might tell a chap where he can get it."

"At some of the low-class tabacconists'. I believe there is a little shop in Swallow Street, sign of the Pig and Whistle, where they sell it along with red herrings, tallow candles, and such things."

"Very low company, indeed," said Lopps.

"I fancy, too, that at most of the beer-shops you may—"

But Lopps darted off suddenly, without listening to the remainder of the address. He had seen Brerewood's door open and himself issue forth, and it would never do to lose sight of him. As he made his exit through the shop-door, he came into abrupt collision with Zillah, who, equally quick-sighted, had also seen

Brerewood, and had rushed forth on his trail. The two looked at each other.

“Beg pardon, Mr. Dillon,” said Lopp, touching his hat.

“All right!” replied Zillah, nodding amicably. “I wish you a good day.” She then crossed to the side of the way on which Brerewood was walking.

“I wish,” thought Lopp, “that outlandish cousin of Clary’s would be off. What is he doing here? I s’pose he’ll turn down some other street soon, and till then I’ll stay on this side. I can keep them both at once in my eye then”; and he walked on meditatively but watchfully. “He’s no chicken, but then he’s mighty smart, and him and Clary seem very thick. But then they say that they are relations. Bother relations! I hate relations. Very glad I ain’t got none. Don’t wish for any. Unless,—well, unless it were a wife,—well, and children; but these are not ’xackly relations; leastways if they are they’re my relations, not my wife’s. Well, perhaps they are my wife’s too; but anyhow, hang it, they’re not cousins, and it’s cousins that I particularly hate and loathe! Well! here’s Charing Cross,

and Brerewood's crossing over. Surely cousin Diddlem will take another cut now. Hallo! he's going the same road! What a bore! But I must cross over, or I shall lose sight of my fox. I wonder where our Jersey cousin's bound for."

So communing with himself, he crossed over at such an angle as brought him again into direct contact with Zillah.

"Beg pardon, Mr. Dillon," said Lopps, as he went on rather briskly, afraid, as the throng was denser here, lest he should allow his fox to slip away.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Lopps," said Zillah, hastening forward for the same reason. "Singular that this person," thought she, "should so pertinaciously hold on to my path. Is he perchance dodging my footsteps? He is young Frampton's servant. Do they suspect me through my disguise?" (and at the very thought she grew pale), "and have they set this man as a spy on me? I will accost him, and yet—no! I must first track Brerewood, for he seems to be going straight to that den of iniquity, Frampton's office."

At that moment Brerewood had reached the corner of the by-street, on which one of the

entrances to Frampton's chambers abutted. He paused a moment, peered round as if to see if any of his acquaintances were in sight, then walked straight to the door of those chambers, and, turning the handle without knocking, entered. Both Zillah and Lopps had meanwhile remained at the corner, because if they had ventured into the lonely by-street they would not have escaped Brerewood's observation, while they could equally well make sure of his entrance into what Zillah had termed the "den of iniquity." For the third time within half an hour the two jostled against each other.

"Beg pardon," repeated Lopps.

"Come, Mr. Lopps," said Zillah, "this must be something beyond mere chance. Tell me—"

But, whether Lopps had not heard or did not choose to hear the supposed Mr. Dillon, he suddenly darted off, and to Zillah's surprise he proceeded to the door whereby Brerewood had entered, and dispensing, as well as his predecessor, with the ceremony of knocking, turned the handle and went in.

"What can be the meaning of that?" said Zillah to herself. "Is this serving-man on

the same scent as myself? Or is he perchance deputed by Brerewood to follow him at a distance, so as to ascertain if anybody has been watching him, and has he now gone to announce that I have been prowling after him? If so, it would be dangerous to wait. At all events I have made sure that Brerewood is really in collusion with Frampton—unless, indeed (for with these slippery natures, all is possible), Frampton himself be a traitor to Government and be playing into Brerewood's hand. I really must solve this mystery, and, be the consequences what they may, here I will remain till this man Lopps re-appears (provided he does so within a reasonable time), and then it shall go hard if I do not elicit some information from him."

Meanwhile Lopps had accosted Crick the porter as an old acquaintance, having seen him twice before—once to hand a letter, and once to deliver a parcel from Frampton Jun. for Frampton Sen.

"Good-day, Mr. Crick, I hope times are jolly with you. Has Mr. Frampton left any message out for his son?"

"Who is his son?" growled out Crick, who

at the moment did not recognize Lopps. "You are not his son!"

"Very nearly: I am his son's man."

"Oh, to be sure! I know you now; you are Mr. Lopps."

"Glad to hear it. Was afraid I wasn't when you looked so fierce."

"I am always fierce to strangers; soft as butter to friends."

"Quite right, Mr. Crick. Butter your friends, and butt at your foes, is my motto. By-the-bye, didn't I see Mr. Brerewood come in just before I did?"

"Brerewood! Don't know such a name: do you mean a short, ugly old fellow?"

"No: a tall, good-looking young chap."

"Oh! it most likely was Colonel Yeo, of the Grenadier Guards."

"Really! It looked to me like young Brerewood."

"Oh, perhaps you mean the Marquis of Cholmondeley—a fat, dark-complexioned man, with one eye, 'cos he lost the other at the battle of Dettingen. He comes here sometimes."

"Quite another man: he came in, you know, two minutes before I did."

“Oh!” said the imperturbable Crick, “that was Flipper, the hairdresser, from Jermyn Street, who has come to powder Mr. Frampton’s wig, which is going to dine to-day at one of our dukes’—I don’t exactly know which of the eight”; and he looked at Lopps with an open smile and a beaming countenance, which said, as plainly as if young Pitt had spoken it, “It’s of no use your pumping for water at this well, Mr. Lopps.”

Lopps took the hint, and gave it up. He complimented Mr. Crick on the snugness of his room and his jolly looks, and, shaking hands, was going out, when Mr. Crick called him back and, with a twinkle in his eye, said—

“I fear, Mr. Lopps, that you are in love.”

“In love!” cried Lopps, taken aback; “why?”

“You have all the symptoms of that there complaint, and I’m sorry for you.”

“What are you driving at, old fat-chops?”

“I have noticed,” said Crick, sententiously, “that when the heart is gone, the head often goes with it.”

“My head! What’s amiss with my head?”

“You came all this long way for no other purpose than to ask whether Mr. Frampton had left any message out for his son, and now you were going off without waiting for an answer.”

“So I was—so I was,” said Lopps, hastily; “I quite forgot.”

“Of course you didn’t travel miles to watch the Marquis of Cholmondeley or Mr. Flipper, the hairdresser, coming in here, and then to inquire about them.”

“Of course not; of course not,” replied Lopps, half angry and half abashed.

“Flipper and his doings,” continued Crick, “can’t possibly have any interest for you.”

“None whatever.”

“He has only come to powder Mr. Frampton’s wig, which is going to dine—”

“Oh, yes; you told me that before. Bother his wig!”

“You came to know if Mr. Frampton had left any message for his son—just for that, and no more. Why go away without it?”

“Well, well. Is there any such message left out for my master?”

“Not at present; but take a seat, and I’ll go and inquire.”

“Oh! it’s not worth while. I will not trouble you.”

“No trouble whatever; while Flipper is powdering his wig, Mr. Frampton can easily give me the message.”

“If there was no message left out, I was told not to ask for any.”

“Well, as you please; but I’ll go and inquire of Mr. Frampton with pleasure.”

“Pray don’t think of it. Good day, Mr. Crick.”

“Good day, Mr. Lopps. Funny, your coming to ask a question and rushing off without waiting for the answer! wasn’t it?”

“Very funny. I s’pose I’m in love as you say; but don’t tell nobody. Good-bye!”

As Lopps went out, each had his little say to himself.

“That chap’s on the spy after Mr. Brilston, he is!” thought Mr. Crick.

“Old grease-butt had me there! That chap has a head on his squab shoulders, he has,” thought Mr. Lopps.

CHAPTER II.

A CONSULTATION WITH FATHER DELANY.

ZILLAH had been waiting with some impatience at the corner of the street, and was indeed about relinquishing her project of cross-examining Lopps, when she saw him emerge from the door of Mr. Frampton's office. She ensconced herself in a doorway, and as he passed she clapped her hand on his shoulder. Taken by surprise, he turned and saw her. Forgetting at the moment that this time he was the party impinged, not impinging, he mechanically touched his hat, saying,—

“Beg pardon, Mr. Dillon!”

“This is the fourth time within an hour that we have unexpectedly run against each other, Mr. Lopps,” said Zillah. “It must be more than coincidence.” Then passing her arm

within his she continued, "Do me the favour to walk this way a little with me, and let us come to an understanding. How is it that you have crossed my path so often to-day?"

"The very thing I was thinking of about you. How comes it, says I, that Mr. Dillon keeps a-dodging of me so, when I'm only just making a call on my old friend, Mr. Crick?"

"Crick? Who is Crick?"

"The doorkeeper of the office over there."

"Was that, then, your sole object?"

"What—to call on Crick? In course it was. What else could it be?"

"Who was the person that went in just before you did?"

"I asked Mr. Crick, and he told me that it was Flipper, the hairdresser."

"Bah! nonsense! That was no hairdresser!"

"It might have been the Marquis of Cholmondeley,—at least, so Crick told me."

"You are playing with me. You said just now it was a hairdresser!"

"I am telling you just what Mr. Crick told me."

“My dear Mr. Lopps,” said she, stopping and looking at him full in the face, “you can’t deceive me. I do not believe in either your Cricks or your Flips. You had been following the person who preceded you into that house, and you went in to make further inquiries after him. Now was it not so?”

And she resumed his arm and the walk.

“How funny!” replied Lopps, “that’s the very thing that I was thinking of about you. Mr. Dillon, says I, is on the watch after that chap. And I know I’m right; for the moment he went towards that door you stopped,—now didn’t you?”

“Well! what if I did?”

“Why then you must have known who he was well enough; and, if so, why ask me?”

“I wish you would be a little more frank with me, Mr. Lopps. Possibly we might have the same object in view, and we might assist each other.”

“If you’ll tell me what you want, I’ll tell you if I’ll help you,” cautiously answered Lopps, wondering all the while what this Jersey man could possibly want with Brerewood.

“Well,” said Zillah, “let us clear the way.

Do you know the gentleman whom you followed into that Government office ? ”

“ Tell me first, do you ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ So do I. Now,” continued Lopps, “ it’s my turn to ask. What is his name ? ”

“ Martin Brerewood.”

“ Right you are. Martin Brerewood it is.”

“ Was your reason for following him that you suspected his being in communication with your master’s father, and you wanted to make sure ? ”

“ The very thing that I was thinking of about you,” replied Lopps, not a little bewildered at the accuracy of knowledge or shrewdness of guess, whichever it was, that this leading question evinced. “ This gentleman,” says I, “ that’s only just come from Jersey, has got it into his head that Mr. Brerewood’s a chum of Mr. Frampton’s, and wants to see whether it is so.”

“ Do you know of anything that should make it strange that those two should be on friendly terms ? ”

“ Well, yes, I do ; but you seem to know all about it, just as much as anybody else ” ; and

then, making a desperate plunge after definite information, he added, "I s'pose, Mr. Dillon, you won't mind telling me how you came to know all about Brerewood, and what you're up to in running him to earth?"

"Well, not just now. But I think we understand each other. Young Mr. Frampton has some reasons of his own for wishing to verify his suspicions of Brerewood. So have I. When is your master most likely to be found at home? I may call on him one of these days."

"Very hard to say. He's seldom at home, except when he's in bed. The chances are, if you call, that you'll find him either not up or, if up, gone out, and if gone out, not come in again. But if you like I'll tell him you would like to see him, and get him to fix an hour for you to call."

"Well, you may do so; and let me know at Mr. Centry's."

And so they parted.

Zillah had taken some trouble to conciliate Mrs. Centry and her daughter, and had gradually, but only gradually, won their favour, if not their affection. She had quickly

dropped the flippant and sarcastic vein that was natural to her, as she found it uncongenial to her new companions. Simple, loving, earnest, and pious, Mrs. Centry displayed opinions, tastes, and habits which afforded to Zillah quite a new view of human nature. At first the woman of the world put all this down to humbug and hypocrisy; but by degrees the steady practice of those gentle domestic virtues, that cheerful performance of family duties, that ever-watchful and loving attention to the comforts and wishes of her husband and daughter, those sallies of good-humoured pleasantry untinged by the slightest infusion of malice, that evenness of temper that shed an atmosphere of serenity throughout the happy home, that quiet charm of manner which wins affectionate regard while it commands respect, produced on Zillah impressions of a different nature.

“Could it be possible,” thought she, “that a life of such sameness and tameness should be a happy one? Their felicity seems to consist in the gratification of trivial wants, petty desires, and humble aspirations—in the accomplishment of slight objects. They are susceptible

of neither the intoxicating rapture of great successes nor the bitterness of great disappointments. They are like those people who are satisfied with playing at cards for nominal stakes, to whom the delirious ecstasy of large gains and the fierce anguish of heavy losses are equally unknown. It is but a colourless life, devoid of shades and lights, a cloudless sky in a northern clime, calmly clear, but cold and cheerless. And yet these people are light-hearted, bright-eyed, and joyous! I wonder whether I could ever have cooled my fervid temperament down to this lukewarm state of existence—a sirocco in Siberia! And yet my brother Philip has accomplished this. His nature was even more volcanic than mine. His intemperance, his excesses, his coarseness, scandalized even me! And now he has faded down into flat respectability. The ferocious tiger has dwindled into a tame, domestic pussy-cat. I fancy, however, that the fire within him is not quenched, but only smouldering. Shall I try to set it ablaze again? Bah! Why should I? Unless, indeed, it should be necessary for my purposes! Well, we shall see.”

On her return from her exploration after

Brerewood, she informed Philip of the discovery she had made, which left no reasonable doubt of that man's relations with the Government, and she tried to engage her brother in a discussion as to the way in which that knowledge should be best used to Brerewood's discomfiture. But Philip declined.

"Zillah! said he, "we are both of us hot, rash, and impulsive. Let us consult my dear friend and adviser, Father Delany, who is coming this evening to shrieve my two ladies, and I wil agree to abide by his decision."

"A priest, Philip!"

"Yes, a priest, Zillah: and why not?"

"Give me a sword, if I require assistance, not a rosary; courage and sagacity, not sermons and prayers. You were not wont of old, Philip, to put your faith in priests."

"Never mind what I was of old; let that be buried in oblivion between us. But you do not know Father Delany. The Catholic priests of England are not like those of France, rich, powerful, and indolent. Here they are bred in the school of adversity. Our priesthood is not recruited from among the idle, the indifferent, or the ambitious. To such it offers

no inducements; for it involves poverty, contumely, and legal penalties. No; it is the zealous, the brave, and the earnest alone who here supply soldiers to holy Church. It has always been so with oppressed sects. Persecution does them good service by eliminating the weak and the unfit, and leaving the strong and the devoted alone to form the band of leaders; it winnows the chaff from the sound grain. Father Delany is a man of powerful intellect, stirring eloquence, profound learning, and undaunted courage; who, nevertheless, is unaffectedly humble, cheerfully pious, and of winning courtesy, especially to the weak and lowly. Austere to himself, he is most kind and indulgent to others. He is at all times at the beck and call of every one who needs him, whether for spiritual or material assistance. He shrinks from neither labour nor danger in the performance of his duties. He is devoted, heart and soul, to the interests of our holy Church, and is intensely anxious that the English people should return within its pale, since out of it there is no salvation. He shares your view that this blessed consummation would be best promoted by the restoration of the Stuart

dynasty, and would gladly suffer martyrdom if his death were necessary to achieve that result. Such, Zillah, is the man whom I propose that we should consult."

"Such a man, if you have faithfully described him, is the very one with whom I should like to hold counsel. You talked of a priest; you have painted a hero."

"As if the two were incompatible! Which was the real hero, the learned Emperor Marcus Aurelius, the subduer of the barbarians of the Danube, or the blessed Polycarp, who under him suffered martyrdom for the Christian faith? Was it Henry, the conqueror of France and Wales; or was it staunch St. Thomas à Becket, whom he butchered at the foot of the altar? Heroes, indeed! The highest heroism is firm endurance unto death for conscience' sake." Then, lowering his voice down to the commonplace tone, but with a slight emphasis on the word "priest," he added, "Shall I appoint this priest to meet us when he comes, Zillah?"

"Yes, do."

They accordingly met in the course of the evening. Father Delany, having concluded

his spiritual ministrations to the two ladies, joined the family over a social and cosy dish of tea, after which, in compliance with a wish previously expressed by Philip, Mrs. Centry and her daughter withdrew, and left the three gentlemen (for Zillah in her male attire may count as such) to confer together. Tall, well made, and neatly dressed in black, Father Delany looked the gentleman he really was. Dark, piercing eyes, an aquiline nose, lips set in graceful curves, and a lofty though rather narrow forehead were the chief features of a countenance that no one beheld without being favourably impressed. To it, when he spoke, the sparkle of his eye and the play of his flexible lips imparted wonderful animation. Fifty years of active brain-work had mottled his jet-black hair with grey, and silver threads glistened brightly through the dark mass, but the intermixture was equalized in hue, and thus concealed, by the free use of hair-powder.

Arthur Delany was the last scion of an ancient and honourable Irish family, whose territorial possessions in the valleys of county Wicklow had once been extensive. Foreclosed mortgages and forced sales had from time to

time so pared and clipped, their once-noble patrimony that at the period of the widowed father's death it had dwindled into a few hundred acres of barren land, the very dregs of the former estate. Arthur, the only child, a lad of fifteen, was then a student at the College of St. Omer, in France, and as the poor remnant of the estate yielded nothing, and was worth nothing, he never returned to claim it. In fact, the few wretched peasants who, in a rough fashion, tilled portions of it just managed to earn a bare subsistence, and had not even the proverbial pig to pay the rent with. In the course of time, as the landlord neither made his appearance nor asserted his claims, these hinds forgot that they were tenants, and claimed to be proprietors. There was no one to gainsay them, and practically they became the owners of their mud hovels and of their three or four acres apiece of boggy soil. Thus ignobly melted away the last shred of the patrimony of the Delanys.

At that celebrated priest-manufactory, the seminary of St. Omer, Arthur Delany made such progress in his studies, and evinced such steadiness of conduct and fervour of devotion,

that he attracted the favourable notice of those consummate judges and appreciators of merit, the Jesuit Fathers. In due time he was ordained a priest, sent on various missions, in all of which he acquitted himself admirably, and was finally deputed to London, ostensibly as one of the chaplains of the Portuguese Embassy, but in reality to exercise his priestly functions among the faithful generally.

“Zillah,” said Philip, “I have concisely told Father Delany the history of your life, the motives of your present disguise, and the nature of the difficulty on which you are desirous of consulting him.”

“I trust,” said Zillah, with unctuous hypocrisy, “that you will, reverend father, overlook my many errors and weaknesses in consideration of my zeal for, and devotion to, the cause of the Holy Catholic Church?”

“Errors and weaknesses, madam, are venial sins from which no man is free. Happy those whose transgressions are confined to these.” Then, proceeding at once to the business in hand, he added, “I do not know Mr. Brerewood, but I have heard of him as a staunch supporter, an active emissary, and a trusted

adviser of the rightful king and his cause. You suspect his fidelity. Have you sure grounds?"

The direct and business-like tenor of this address placed Zillah at her ease. She had had very little intercourse with ecclesiastics, except with godless and graceless French abbés and such Church dignitaries as the licentious Cardinal Dubois. From a sincere devotee like Father Delany she had expected long-winded and sanctimonious forms of speech, interlarded with pious reflections and exhortations, and she was agreeably disappointed.

"I was warned against him," she replied, "by a communication from the right quarter in Paris; a subsequent conversation with him strengthened my suspicions that he was in close connexion with that arch-enemy of the Stuarts, Frampton, of the Secret Service Office, and I to-day, thanks to my disguise, was able to trace him to the door of that office, into which he entered, and where he must certainly have remained some time."

"Have you formed any opinion as to whether this was a first visit or one of a series?"

"So far, I have no positive grounds for any

definite opinion on that point, but I conjecture—”

“Excuse me, madam, but allow me to ask a question. When he knocked, and the door was opened to him, did he enter at once, or did he hold any parley with the servant?”

“Now, my good father, that you call my attention to it, I see it: it could not have been his first visit. The front door of this office is apparently kept on the latch, and can be opened from the outside. Mr. Brerewood did not knock at all, but at once turned the handle and went straight in. No stranger going there for the first time would have done so.”

“I agree with you. In his various conferences with you has Mr. Brerewood ever evinced an acquaintance with Government designs or secret measures which could only have been derived from Government sources?”

“Yes, he has,” eagerly returned Zillah. “In his very last interview he warned me of their intention to arrest me; and hence my flight.”

“Pardon me, madam, that is not a conclusive proof. The announcement may have been a pure invention of Mr. Brerewood himself, for purposes we cannot divine.”

“True,” replied Zillah; and the more she reflected on the sudden change in Brerewood’s advice in connexion with that warning, the more she shared the shrewd priest’s doubt. “But at the same interview he produced to me a countersign, consisting of three letters, which I thought only known to myself and my private friends, but which may have come, through some treachery abroad, to the knowledge of Government.”

“How did he account to you for the possession of that secret?”

“He stated that he obtained it from some friend of his who had occasional access to private information from Government officials.”

“Did you believe in that explanation?”

“I did at the time, but, viewing it by the light of subsequent occurrences, I now see plainly that I was deceived, and that Brerewood must have obtained his information from Government direct.”

“I strongly suspect so too,” rejoined Father Delany; “but the evidence against him I consider by no means conclusive or complete. What do you think of it, Mr. Centry?”

“I have,” replied Philip, “no logical con-

viction, but I feel as sure that he is guilty as if I had."

"Such moral conviction may afford grounds for moral reprobation, but does not justify active measures. May I inquire," added he, turning to Zillah, "what course you propose to adopt?"

"Nay," replied Zillah; "do not ask me. I am a daughter of the South. My blood boils easily. I might suggest measures which would not receive your approval, much less your sanction."

"Violent acts are not often the most effectual, nor are they even always the boldest—just as rashness is not true courage."

"Could you, my father," asked Philip, "suggest how we had best proceed?"

"If," replied Father Delany, "Brerewood be really a traitor, it is a duty that we owe to the cause of legitimacy, with which the interests and glory of the holy Catholic religion are so intimately connected, to unmask him, and so prevent his doing any further mischief. But, first, you must make quite sure of his guilt, and, secondly, quite sure that you can make it apparent to others."

"How can we?" asked Philip. "My sister

is proscribed; she can hardly even prosecute further search for proofs of Brerewood's guilt, much less become his public accuser."

"To convict him, to expose him, and to punish him at one stroke," said the priest, "would be a result worth trying for; would it not?"

"I fear that it is beyond possibility."

"I fancy I see a way. Unfortunately your sister is the only witness to Mr. Brerewood's entrance into the Secret Service Office. If we only had another!"

"If that is all," cried Zillah, exultingly, "you need not be at a loss, for there is another." She then narrated all that had passed between her and Lopps, during and after their joint watch over Brerewood's movements. Father Delany listened attentively.

"Can you guess," asked he, "what can be young Frampton's object in tracing a connexion between his father and Brerewood?"

"I am quite at a loss to account for it."

"It is essential to discover that. The young man may have an end in view that is so incompatible with our own designs that the evidence which this servant of his can supply may be

unavailable to us. And yet that evidence is indispensable to the success of the project which I have in view."

"I intimated to this Lopps that I intended to call on his master. Shall I carry out my intention?"

"It is somewhat hazardous; but I see no other plan, unless indeed you could worm the secret out of this man with the uncouth monosyllabic name. Is he ductile?"

"I fear not. He is very sharp and very reticent."

"Well, you must risk it. Call on this young Frampton. Do your best to ascertain whether his views as to Brerewood run counter to or parallel with our own. I incline to the belief that he is hostile as we are to that man, although, no doubt, from a different motive."

"Rely on it, Father Delany, that I shall spare no effort to ascertain his views."

"Acquaint me with the result of your interview as soon as you can. Your brother knows where to find me. Meanwhile, dear friends, be of good cheer, for God will protect those who work for the glory of His name."

"It would be premature, I suppose," doubt.

ingly put forth Zillah, "to let us have some inkling of your plan?"

"It would. I have only roughly sketched its outline. I will put it into shape before I say more about it. But remember that the evidence of this Lopps is indispensable. And now good night: Heaven bless you both. Remember me in your prayers"; and he departed.

CHAPTER III.

I SEND BREREWOOD A CHALLENGE.

CHARLEY FRAMPTON (at home, for a wonder) and I were comfortably seated over a quiet game of chess when Lopp's returned from his exploration. He told us how he had watched Brerewood into Mr. Frampton's office, and this satisfied us that, however big a bluebottle the Jacobite conspirator might be, the official spider had emmeshed him in his web. Lopp's then gave us a lively account of his having hunted in couples with a Jersey man, a cousin of a friend of his, who was giving chase to the same game, and seemed equally bent, for purposes of his own which he refused to explain, on making the same discovery as to Brerewood's perfidy that we were ourselves intent upon.

"Now, Frank," said Charley, "we have arrived at the pleasing certainty that this versatile personage is betraying everybody all round, and I was right in my conjecture that it was from him that my father obtained his knowledge of what we may call the closet-scene at Mr. Uppenham's, in which you played so conspicuous a part."

"The crafty villain!" I exclaimed, vehemently, "who would have thought it possible that a man could be such a vile wretch?"

"I, for one," answered Charley, "since I from the first declared it was not only possible but a fact. But, now that we have got to the fact, what are we to do with it?"

"Denounce him, expose him, punish him, crush him!"

"A fine imitation of the Ciceronian '*Abiit, excessit, evasit, erupit*'! With all my heart, dear boy; but first just tell me how?"

"How? Why, surely, there must be twenty ways."

"One will do."

"Well, one way is,—I will challenge him, and make him confess his infamy with my foot

on his breast and the point of my sword at his throat."

"Vrekekekex koax koax!" exclaimed Charley, bursting into a laugh; "that is mighty fine and heroic; but are you quite sure that he will allow you to get into that commanding position? Are you sure that it might not be his foot and his sword on your breast and at your throat? Bah! a duel proves nothing, except which is the best fencer, and not even that with certainty, for a slippery worm-cast may give the victory to the worse man."

"Well, perhaps it might be better in the first instance to denounce him to the world, and hold him up to public contempt and detestation, by sending an account of the whole affair to the *London Journal*."

"My dear fellow, if the other eighteen ways you have in store for crushing Brerewood are no better than the two you have suggested, he will have the best of it. What you propose is utterly out of the question. It amounts to this—that you should take a trumpet, and, sounding it loudly, attract the largest possible crowd, and then address them thus:—‘I have called you together, good friends, to disclose to

you a secret which my friend, Charley Framp-ton, imparted to me in confidence, and which had been revealed to him by his father, also in confidence, and out of kindly feeling to me, so that—”

“Say no more, Charley,” I interposed; “I see it now, plainly.”

“But that is not all, Frank; you propose to announce to the assembled multitude that your uncle’s house had been used for treasonable purposes, which—”

“Pray, hold your peace, Charley. I tell you that I withdraw my proposition.”

“Well, to be sure, when a sober, well-behaved, prudent, and discreet philosopher like you, Frank, does lose his balance, he rushes into freaks and fancies inconceivable to hot-headed, harebrained harum-scarums like myself.”

“Well, you shrewd, sagacious, dear old harum-scarum, it is your turn now to suggest a plan of action.”

“I confess that I am at a loss till I give the matter further consideration. But a thought occurs to me. We might perhaps obtain some useful information from that Jersey fellow that Lopps spoke of.”

He then summoned Lopps, and ascertained that the Jersey man, whose name was Dillon, had expressed a wish to call on us, and wanted a time fixed at which he might make sure of finding Mr. Frampton at home.

“By all means let us see him. What do you say, Frank?”

“I quite agree, and the sooner the better.”

“Will you be at home at four to-morrow?”

“I will manage it,” said I.

“Well, then, I will appoint that time.”

He accordingly wrote a few lines to Mr. Dillon, addressed at the Turk’s Head Coffee-house, St. Martin’s Lane, as instructed by Lopps, to whom was entrusted the delivery of the letter.

“At all events,” said Charley, “whether Nemesis overtake Brerewood or not, one good result of our detection of his double-dealing is that you are freed from the charge of having violated your engagement and peached to Government as to the meeting at your uncle’s.”

“Yes, thank Heaven! I am absolved from that imputation; and, to say the truth, the bare possibility that any one, set aside those persons whose good opinion I value at the highest,

could, for a moment, entertain the slightest suspicion of my being guilty of such a mean and dishonourable act weighed most heavily on my mind."

"Well, well, old boy, that is now over, and you stand again in the eyes of the world as the immaculate Bayard, '*sans peur et sans reproche.*'"

"It is, indeed, an immense relief, and I thank kind Heaven for it."

At that moment a letter addressed to me, which had just come by the post, was brought up. I opened it, and found that the contents were as follows:—

"SIR,—It is our disagreeable duty to charge you with having violated your word of honour, and betrayed to Government the details of the political conference which we, the undersigned, held some time ago at the house of Mr. Uppenham. Of these details you obtained a surreptitious knowledge by the discreditable process of listening through a keyhole. At the time we placed confidence in your promise of secrecy, which confidence, it is now made manifest to us, was misplaced; and we have

sworn to each other that we shall not rest till you have paid the penalty of your perfidiousness. Meanwhile, if you should desire satisfaction for this solemn and deliberate impugnement of your honour, we are eagerly ready, individually and successively, to meet you at the time, at the place, and in the rotation which you may be pleased to appoint. This is all that we deem it necessary for the present that you should be informed of by

“Your very humble and obedient servants,

“M. BREREWOOD, J. BIGSHAW,

A. GORDON, F. GAYLEY.”

“So much,” said Charley, “for shouting before we are out of the wood. Why, that confounded Brerewood, instead of waiting for you to fix the deed on him, has fixed it on you!”

“That man is my evil genius. Oh, that I should undergo the humiliation of receiving so insulting a letter!”

“Mark the artful way in which they avoid sending you a challenge, but throw the onus on you of sending the challenge to them.”

“Of course, it is an opportunity and pre-

text of which I shall eagerly avail myself; and, as fortunately they leave me the choice, Martin Brerewood may at once prepare for an encounter, which certainly not both shall survive."

"I am not sure if that would not be playing his own game. I fancy that *hoc velit Ithacus*. Let us think it over a little. You are such a fire-eater, Frank. It is I who am the cool, steady, model young man now."

"Nonsense, Charley; there is a limit to every man's endurance. I cannot stand this gross affront, come what may. I shall write a cartel; and, if you will be my second, I shall ask you to deliver it yourself into the hands of Brerewood."

"Well, if you are so eager for the fray, I suppose that I must not baulk you."

I took a pen, and wrote as follows:—

"GENTLEMEN,—I utterly and indignantly deny that I have betrayed your secret. One of yourselves must have been the traitor. Unless you immediately retract and apologize, I claim the satisfaction which you proffer, and select Mr. Martin Brerewood as my first antagonist.

My friend, Mr. Charles Frampton, will deliver this letter, and make arrangements as to time and place.

“I have the honour to be, &c.

“F. ALLERTON.”

“Short and pithy,” remarked Charley, after having read it, “When do you wish me to pitch this hand-grenade into the enemy’s camp?”

“Why, at once, if you see no objection.”

“I see a lot of objections, but I shall not state them; for in matters which concern a man’s honour he must himself be the supreme arbiter. But, should Brerewood not be at home, shall I leave your note, or bring it back and try again to-morrow?”

“By all means leave it. I am on thorns till their insolent letter is rebuked by my rejoinder.”

Charley accordingly went; and, as Brerewood was out, he left my missive, or, as he expressed it, he fixed the petard at the enemy’s gate.

That same evening Brerewood had been invited by Mrs. Uppenham to her house with a view to some further conference on the reli-

gious aspect of the movement in favour of the Stuarts. Since her last conversation with him on this subject her mind had been much exercised and disturbed by the facts he had alleged and the inferences he had drawn from them. After much communing with my uncle and Alice, both of whom were disposed to take Brerewood's view of the matter, and with herself, whose firm nature disinclined her to swerve from long-cherished opinions, she determined on obtaining, if possible, further proof of the reported subserviency of James Stuart to the fanatical designs of the Papal court.

At her request Brerewood, on his arrival, was left alone with my aunt; and she explained to him her doubts as to the authenticity of the intelligence he had received from Rome, and urged its insufficiency, even if true, unless supported by the concurrence of other facts tending in the same direction.

"My dear madam," replied Brerewood, "of the veracity of my informant at Rome I do not entertain the faintest doubt. That he is accurately acquainted with all that passes there I am also fully convinced. But my

belief in him is personal to myself; and you must take that for what it may be worth, for I cannot bind you to share it. As to other evidence tending in the same direction, need I do more than remind you how James II. subordinated his political interests to his religious bigotry,—how, with him, a heretic and a rebel were convertible terms? And it is notorious that James III. does not yield to his father in his zeal for Popish supremacy. We have a sad alternative presented to us, have we not?"

"That is an old story, Mr. Brerewood. We were aware of all that when we first engaged in the task of restoring the Stuart dynasty. As His Majesty's peculiar views of religion did not deter us then, neither should they now. A man's regard for his own conscience should but make him the more regardful of the consciences of others. I require something more than mere general conjectures that, because the king is a rigid Catholic, it must necessarily follow that he would assail Protestantism, and that his Catholic counsellors would abet him."

"That such are the views and intentions of

the Catholic party I think I could make so evident to you that no doubt could possibly remain on your mind."

"I question it. They are Englishmen as well as ourselves."

"True; but before all, above all, and overriding all, they are Catholics."

"You talked of evidence that would convince me; what is it?"

"If you would not mind incurring some personal trouble and fatigue, I think that there exist the means, not of my convincing you, but of your convincing yourself, of the truth of my allegations concerning the views of the Catholic party."

"I am in search after the truth, and in that search I think nothing of labour and trouble."

"There may also be some slight degree of risk."

"I will encounter it."

"My scheme also necessitates disguise."

"That is not to my taste; but, if necessary—well, say on."

"And that disguise must be in male attire."

"Still more objectionable. Is this indispensable?"

“Quite.”

“Unfold your plan, and I will then tell you whether it offers me sufficient inducement to vanquish my repugnance.”

“Whether you adopt my plan or not, I must stipulate for secrecy.”

“I promise it.”

“Then listen. A rumour has lately obtained currency among the Catholic adherents of the Stuarts that the Protestant party, in order to avoid those conflicts that led to the expulsion of James II., had made it a condition of their active support of the king that he should solemnly bind himself by a written covenant not only to respect the rights, immunities, and political status of the Protestant Church as established by law, but further not to seek, by direct or indirect means, to procure the repeal of the existing enactments which entail on Catholics certain political disabilities.”

“A very proper measure, too,” interposed my aunt, “could His Majesty but be made to see it.”

“He would sooner allow his right hand to be cut off. Nor, indeed, was the attempt made, seeing its utter hopelessness. But the

rumour, unfounded as it is, has created so much distrust, discontent, and agitation among the Catholic section of our party that I, Sir John Lester, Captain Letheby, and a few others have, by order of the acting committee, invited the Catholic leaders and such friends as they may select to meet us one day next week for the purpose of removing that impression from their minds."

"This may be policy, but it looks to me like humiliation."

"Will you attend this meeting?"

"I! For what purpose?"

"To see with your own eyes the attitude of the Catholic party; to hear with your own ears the scope and extent of their hopes and aspirations."

"I understand now. You expect that they will on such an occasion unreservedly unfold their projects in respect to—"

"Excuse me," interrupted Brerewood, "not unreservedly, but with less reserve than they would exercise were they not under the influence of excitement, and were they not addressing a small assembly chiefly composed of men sharing their own political views."

"But they only form a small minority of the king's supporters."

"Do not let us, madam, delude ourselves with false hopes. When His Majesty is restored to power, his confidential advisers will be selected from that group, even if his official ministers be not."

Mrs. Uppenham reflected for a minute, and then said,—

"How could I gain admittance to such a meeting, which will, of course, be confined to a select circle of well-known individuals?"

"If Mrs. Uppenham will condescend to confide in me and bear me company in the garb of a male friend, there will be no difficulty whatever."

"I presume that it would commit me to nothing?"

"To nothing. You need but remain quiet, observe, listen, and draw your own inferences."

"When and where?"

"On Friday next—this day week—at a private Catholic chapel in Fetter Lane."

"A Catholic chapel!"

"Do not be scandalized, madam. There

will be no religious service, though there will be much religious vehemence."

"Well, if my husband will sanction my embarking in such an expedition, I will accept your offer and join you."

And Brerewood went his way, rejoicing that he had carried his point.

My aunt remained pondering deeply over the causes that had so signally arrested, perhaps turned, the course of Brerewood's sympathies with a cause to which he had hitherto displayed so much active devotion. Not that she for a moment doubted his sincerity; but it was the suddenness of the transition by which she was startled.

"He must always have been aware," thought she, "of the certain amount of disturbance and danger to the Protestant Church which a Catholic monarch portended. But I suppose that this danger must have been brought more closely home to him by the intelligence he has lately received from Rome. And, indeed, why should I be surprised at its influence over his mind, since I have, to some extent, felt its influence over my own? I must look deeper into this. Come what may,

I will attend that meeting, and judge for myself."

At that moment my uncle (having heard Brerewood take his departure) returned to her, and learned what had passed. He wished, and proposed, to accompany my aunt in her visit to the meeting in question; but finally he yielded to her representations, and consented to her going with Brerewood alone and in disguise.

CHAPTER IV.

OUR INTERVIEW WITH MR. DILLON.

THE next day, at the hour we had named in our letter to Mr. Dillon inviting him to call upon us, Charley and I were punctually in attendance to receive our mysterious visitor. Nor had we long to wait, for in a few minutes he was ushered in by Lopps as "Mr. Dillon, of Jersey."

"Pray be seated, Mr. Dillon," said Charley. "My name is Frampton, and I beg to introduce to you my friend Mr. Allerton."

I noticed that on seeing me our visitor seemed rather startled, and looked at me with a steady stare, as though trying to recollect where he had seen me before. The fact is that Zillah had recognized me, and was taken by surprise, not being aware that I had taken up

my abode with Frampton, and was wondering within herself whether I should know her through her disguise. For my part her male dress, her powdered hair, and the somewhat swaggering manner which she had purposely assumed quite concealed her from my ken, and I had no suspicion that I now had before me the much-sought Countess Molina. Remember that I had only seen her once, and then under circumstances that interfered very much with my coolness of observation. Mr. Dillon replied,—

“I had not anticipated the pleasure of seeing two gentlemen; my visit was intended for Mr. Frampton alone.”

“I have no secrets from Mr. Allerton, who resides with me; besides, if I am not mistaken in the object of your call, Mr. Allerton is personally still more interested in it than I am.”

“May I ask what that object is ‘to which you deem that my visit is to be ascribed?’”

“To bring our conversation at once to light upon, instead of suffering it to hover over, its main topic, I will tell you. Your object is to ascertain the nature of the interest we feel in Mr. Martin Brerewood’s movements.”

“You have guessed quite right, Mr. Framp-ton, and I thank you for going so straight to the point.”

“But we also, on our side, should like to know the nature of the interest which *you* take in that gentleman’s movements.”

“Of course; I cannot expect your confidence without reciprocating it.”

“You have, I believe,” abruptly asked Charley, “only quite recently arrived from Jersey?”

“It is so.”

“Have you any family relationship with Mr. Brerewood?”

“None whatever.”

“Then you will not be surprised, Mr. Dillon, nor will you take it amiss, if we feel somewhat curious as to your motives in watching the goings and comings of one who is a stranger to you?”

“I did not say that he was a stranger to me; but whatever dealings I may have had with Mr. Brerewood (and they would make a long story, with which I shall not trouble you) they have but a slight bearing on my business to-day with you. I will imitate your brevity

and directness. Our respective views towards the person we have named are either of a friendly or of a hostile nature. If our views (be they friendly or be they hostile) prove identical, we may assist each other and work together. Should we find that they differ, why then we may part with mutual respect for each other's frankness and go our separate ways."

"Upon my word, Mr. Dillon, you have stated the case very lucidly, and I am inclined to assent to your proposal: what do you say to it, Frank?"

I saw no objection to the course suggested, and indeed felt some degree of curiosity to see what would come of it. I therefore replied that I left the matter in his hands, and felt disposed to entertain Mr. Dillon's overtures.

"Well, then," resumed Charley, "it only remains for me to ask you, Mr. Dillon, in which of the two categories your own feelings towards Mr. Brerewood rank."

"You have been too quick for me, Mr. Frampton. I was just about to put the same question to you."

"I see how it is: we neither of us wish to

be the first to commit ourselves to the statement; and yet one of us must."

"Is that really necessary? Is there no middle course?"

"I do not see any unless it be that both of us should speak at once."

"Excuse me, but I think that I see a way."

"I shall be glad if you will suggest it."

"It is this. Give me a slip of paper, and take one yourself. Let us, unseen by each other, write on it the word 'friendly' or 'hostile,' as the case may be, and then exchange papers."

"An ingenious device. You are a man of resource, Mr. Dillon."

The slips were distributed, written upon, and exchanged. On both of them the word "friendly" was inscribed. The two looked at each other with a mingled air of surprise, doubt, and perplexity. Frank handed the papers to me, and I shared the mystification, for I knew that in the one case the word "friendly" conveyed an untruth, and I strongly suspected that it equally did so on the other. Meanwhile Charley burst into a fit of laughter, and Dillon, addressing him

interrogatively, and with a meaning glance, said,—

“ Well, Mr. Frampton ? ”

“ Well, Mr. Dillon, so we are both friends of Mr. Brerewood, and we are to club our energies together to assist him in his designs ? ”

I could stand it no longer ; and, rising impatiently from my seat, I exclaimed,—

“ Pray let us put an end to this unworthy jugglery. We are *not* friends of Mr. Brerewood, and I care not who knows it. I have motives, both private and public, for hating him, and I shall take all measures in my power to expose and castigate him.”

“ Say you so ? ” cried Dillon. “ Now that you have spoken so openly, and I fully believe so truthfully, I will do the same. I also have good reasons for bearing ill-will to Brerewood, and I also have sworn to unmask his treachery and, if possible, secure his punishment.”

“ Then why did you,” asked Charley, “ write ‘ friendly ’ on the paper you handed me ? ”

“ I did not like to declare my enmity to the man till I had made sure that my true feeling towards him was shared by yourselves. Had

your paper contained the word 'hostile,' I would have retracted mine and expressed my real sentiments. But why did you also use the word 'friendly'?"

"From precisely the same motive, and with the same intention; so that, had it not been for the brutal frankness of my friend Frank, our diplomatic artfulness would have brought us to a dead-lock."

"Brutal frankness," rejoined Dillon, laughingly, "does now and then make a blind rush and win a race; but I think that, as a rule, diplomacy is the safest horse to back."

"The air of Jersey must, I think, be sharpening to the wits, Mr. Dillon, for your smartness does not savour of provincialism."

"I will accept that as a compliment, although it might be construed into an innuendo."

"Which I beg most earnestly to declaim. But, now that we have got so far, what step is this, our alliance offensive and defensive, to inaugurate?"

"Permit me to ask, have you yourselves any plan of action?"

"To drop diplomacy and resort to brutal frankness, we have none. It was with a view

to obtain some clue to one that we courted this interview with you."

"I have one semi-matured, and it was with a view to your assistance in carrying it out that I sought this meeting."

"Expound your plan, then, and you shall have our valuable aid. Mr. Allerton here is inventive, and I am critical. He will suggest improvements, if your plan be susceptible of any, and you will find me very useful in picking holes and detecting weak points; for most plans have some such."

"Thank you very much for your offer, of which I shall avail myself in due time. For to-day, I limit myself to this single request,—will you promise me that your servant-man shall, when and where I require him to do so, give evidence of his having seen Brerewood enter the doors of the Secret Service Office?"

"That I promise willingly. But surely your call on us for co-operation is not to be confined to that. Where are your plots and counter-plots, your manœuvres and stratagems? We offer you as workers in the common cause the teeming brains of two active men of the world, when lo! you reject them, and give the

preference to five minutes' evidence from the uneducated Lopps!"

"Believe me, Mr. Frampton, I neither undervalue nor reject the assistance which you can personally afford me, and in a day or two I shall call on you for it, and at the same time point out in what way it can be made available. Now that I have the assurance that the witness I was in quest of will be forthcoming, I can proceed to perfect my plan. Till that is finally settled I must crave your forbearance, and I promise that you shall be made acquainted with all its details in ample time for you to take part in its execution."

"All this, my dear sir, seems very mysterious. You say to us, as they do to children in the nursery, 'Open your mouths (as to your own devices) and shut your eyes (as to mine) and you'll see what I will send you. It looks almost as if, having seen our cards, you wished to conceal your hand from us.'"

"To carry on the metaphor, your cards, by your own admission, are mere blanks, for you have no plan."

"But if we are to play from your hand we are surely entitled to know what cards you hold."

“Quite right; and I readily promise that you shall see them all before you are called upon to play. Till then kindly allow me to bid you adieu.”

“Well,” said Charley, in a discontented mood, “this visit has certainly had the advantage of making us acquainted with Mr. Dillon, but not of making us acquainted with anything else of much importance. We know nothing of his reasons for bearing a grudge against Brerewood.”

“Nor does he know anything of yours,” retorted Mr. Dillon; “so there we are quits.”

“Frampton!” said I, interposing, for I saw that further discussion would be fruitless, and would probably not lead to increased cordiality, “I think that we have to do with a man of honour, and since Mr. Dillon has pledged himself that he has interests identical with our own, and has engaged to submit his plans unreservedly to us in two or three days, I conceive that we are bound to trust to him and to wait.”

“Thank you, Mr. Allerton; your confidence in me shall be justified. I must now beg of

you to excuse me. I thank you for your courtesy, and I bid you adieu."

After his departure Charley said to me,—

"I do not quite understand that mysterious personage, Frank. He may truly have come from Jersey, just as a Yorkshire man may come from Watford, because he passes through it; but rely on it he has taken part in more stirring scenes, and has mingled with more polished society, than quiet St. Helier's affords."

"His accent," assented I, "plainly indicates the Frenchman. I have seen some such face before, but I cannot recollect where. That we shall have him here again soon I feel pretty certain."

"Mean time, I do not fancy that we can do any more in that matter for the present."

"Unless it be for me to meet Brerewood single handed. Surely we ought to hear from him soon."

On returning home, after his interview with Mrs. Uppenham, Brerewood had found my letter. It was directed externally to him, although the inside was addressed to the four

gentlemen who had signed the letter to which it was a reply.

“It can wait,” thought he; “my answer to it need not be made till I have submitted its contents to the other three, for it concerns them as well as myself. My hands are so full just now that this little matter may as well wait its regular turn. On my way to-morrow to keep my appointment with Frampton I may perhaps meet or call on Bigshow, or one of the other two, and settle what course to pursue with that conceited fellow, Allerton.”

CHAPTER V.

A COOLNESS BETWEEN THE ALLIES.

THE next day, at about the same time that we were receiving the visit of Mr. Dillon, *alias* Zillah, *alias* the Countess Molina, Brerewood made his promised call on Mr. Frampton, senior. He had already acquainted this watchful official of the meeting that was to be secretly held to allay the apprehensions of the Catholic party, as explained to Mrs. Uppenham. But, as the time and place had not been definitely fixed when he made his previous communication, he attended now to complete the information. Not that Frampton now attached the same importance as heretofore to such intelligence, but he was obliged to make some show of interest in it.

The place fixed on," said Brerewood, "is

old Dame Horrebow's Chapel, in Turnagain Alley, Fetter Lane."

"Well, she is a spirited Papist, is that old lady! She has spent a fortune on chapels and priests. I suppose she will be canonized some day."

"What an ugly saint she will make!"

"Not a bit uglier than a saint should be. Beaming eyes and rosy lips are the appanage of lovely sinners, not of holy saints."

"But to go on: the time appointed for the meeting is Friday next, at eight o'clock P.M."

"Very well. I may as well make a memorandum of it," said Frampton, yawning.

Brerewood was nettled at the indifference with which his information, once so highly prized and coveted, was now received. He therefore said sarcastically,—

"Apparently it is hardly worth your taking that trouble. Perhaps Titlings, behind the curtain there, has got it down."

"Ah, by-the-bye, perhaps he has. Titlings," he added, somewhat raising his tone, "have you taken that down?"

"Yes, sir," replied a faint contralto voice from behind the curtain.

“Really, Mr. Frampton,” cried Brerewood, angrily, “this is hardly treating me with ordinary courtesy! After all that has passed between you and me I might expect—”

“Excuse my little joke, Mr. Brilston, in answer to your little sarcasm. Titlings!” he continued, “I should like to see the *Evening Post* of last night.”

Immediately the shadowy automaton glided from his recess and noiselessly quitted the room.

“I mean no disrespect to you,” added Mr. Frampton, “but the fact is that, since all danger is dispelled of a French invasion, and of a Jacobite rising in the South, the capers and curvets of the party in this part of the country have become comparatively indifferent to us, and we have no longer so vivid an interest in watching their movements.”

“Do you mean, then, that my services have lost their importance in your eyes?”

“By no means, my dear Mr. Brilston, by no means!” replied Mr. Frampton, who, although he had sucked the orange nearly dry, had not yet quite made up his mind to throw the peel away; “what you have done for us is highly appreciated, and that appreciation extends to

what you may still do for us when the opportunity occurs. But at present the *quieta non movere* members of the Administration are in the ascendant, and their policy is to let the Jamesites amuse themselves and play at make-believe rebellion (as long as it is play) till they are tired."

"So you will take no action in regard to the contemplated meeting on Friday?"

"None whatever, if they will only behave quietly and not needlessly excite public attention."

Brerewood felt aggrieved and vexed. If Government, instead of hating and dreading the Jacobites as formidable foes, took to viewing them with an indifference bordering on contempt, his importance as an auxiliary vanished. There was something, too, in Frampton's cool and perfunctory manner which jarred on his nerves. He could not openly resent this provoking apathy, but that made him only the more inwardly bitter. Was there no weak place in this man's armour through which he might strike at him? Was his panoply without flaw or crevice? Suddenly he bethought himself of the letter which he had received from me, and which he had with him.

“It is not everybody, Mr. Frampton, who can take things as coolly as you do. Look at this letter! I am peremptorily called upon to exchange sword-thrusts, in consequence of that ridiculous scene at Uppenham’s. Somehow (by-the-bye, I wonder how!) it has got wind that you have been told all about it. Then came the question as to who it was that told you. Naturally Bigshow and the rest lay it upon Allerton.”

“And the rest?” interrupted Frampton; “that includes you, who were yourself my informant?”

“Well, yes. You would surely not expect me to criminate myself?”

“Oh, certainly not. Go on.”

“We consequently wrote a stinging letter to Allerton, accusing him of having violated his word of honour, &c., to which he has replied by this challenge to me as the first of a series of antagonists.”

“Am I to read it?”

“Yes, certainly.”

“What is this? I see that my son is to act as second to Allerton?”

“I am sorry to say that he is,” said Brerewood, in a tone of assumed sympathy, though inwardly delighted and exulting to find

Frampton somewhat moved, as it was for this purpose that he had produced the letter.

“Have you seen him, then?” asked Frampton. “What arrangements has he concluded with you?”

“I have made none as yet. I was not within when he called. He left the letter for me.”

“What reply have you made?”

“Before I can give a reply to it I am bound to see and consult Bigshow, Gordon, and Gayley, who are co-interested in the matter. I intend calling on them when I leave you, and I shall then send this fiery challenger a proper reply.”

“Allerton will have his work cut out for him, if he is to run the gauntlet of four successive duels.”

“My hope is that he will not live to fight even a second.”

“What a fool Charles is to get mixed up with such a matter!”

“I am truly sorry, for your sake. Setting aside the probability that the seconds may take to a little tourney of their own, in imitation of their principals, such an array of consecutive duels, if Allerton survive the first, will bring your son into full-blown notoriety.”

"I suppose it will," calmly said Frampton.

"To have been appointed second in four combats, even though they should not all have been fought, will make him famous, and," added Brerewood, with malicious impressiveness, "bring the name of Frampton prominently before the world."

"The honour is a questionable one," said Frampton, in an impassive tone.

"Could I be of any use to you, my dear Mr. Frampton, in endeavouring to dissociate your son from these awkward affairs?"

"No; I think not."

"It cannot be pleasant for one in your official position to have your name mixed up with deeds of strife and blood."

Frampton in reply merely shrugged his shoulders, and went on listlessly cutting a point to his pencil.

"But as you do not seem to care one jot about either your son or your name," said Brerewood, sneeringly, piqued by the elder man's apparent apathy, "I had better, I suppose, let things take their course."

"I suppose so," replied the imperturbable Frampton.

Whereupon Brerewood departed in a huff, making a ceremonious bow, which was returned with the most decorous gravity.

Mr. Frampton remained standing a few minutes, immersed in thought.

“I do not at all like this absurd freak of Charley’s,” murmured he to himself; “and I must put a stop to it. That fellow Brerewood’s sole object in showing me that letter was to annoy me. It has annoyed me, and I owe him some return for it. However, he did not get much show of annoyance out of me. I know it vexed him that I appeared not to be vexed. I hope that Allerton will give a good account of him. He is getting disagreeable: he will have to be tabooed. But Charles must get out of that mess. Not but what I like the spirit of the lad, only this is an inconvenient and unsuitable occasion on which to display it. I cannot afford to have my name flirted about in connexion with these petty broils. No; I must interpose. Let me see: I will at once send him a note to intimate my wishes. He is a good lad, and will attend to them. Allerton, too, is a reasonable fellow; and if my note reaches them before any decided

step is taken by Charles they can easily find a substitute for him."

So saying, he took up a sheet of unofficial paper, and wrote as follows:—

"MY DEAR CHARLES,—You must oblige me by not acting as second to Mr. Allerton in the duel with Mr. Martin Brerewood, in which I understand that he is about to be engaged; and I request from Mr. Allerton the favour of his exempting you from that duty, and finding (which, no doubt, he will easily do) a substitute for its performance. Perhaps it is only fair that I should acquaint you with my reasons for making this request, and I will do so in strict confidence. The fact is that my relations with Mr. Brerewood for a long time past have been of so friendly and peculiar a nature that I cannot allow our name to be mixed up with this affair. It is, of course, of great political importance that my secret connexion with Mr. Brerewood should remain undivulged, and I only reveal it to you because present circumstances render it necessary. I place the utmost reliance on your honour and affection, and feel sure that my

secret will never be disclosed either by you or your friend Mr. Allerton, to whom you may show this note. I began by saying 'you must oblige me,' and I conclude by emphatically repeating that *you must oblige me*. Destroy this after perusal.

"Your affectionate father,

"J. FRAMPTON."

He closed, addressed, and sealed the letter with his unofficial seal, and rang one of the three bells whose pulls hung by the side of the mantel-piece. Crick answered the call.

"Crick," said he, "let this note be delivered at my son's house without delay."

"Messengers all out just now, sir, but expect Longshanks back in a few minutes."

"Well, send it by the very first messenger that is available. Where the deuce are all the fellows?"

"Out, sir. I expect Longshanks in—"

"Bother Longshanks! Send it on by the first opportunity."

"If it's important, sir, I can—"

"Important? Not in the least. What makes you fancy that it is? Oh, no; it's only

about a—King Charles spaniel that I want my son to get for me. But you will please, without fail, get it taken on as quickly as possible.”

“All right, sir”; and off went Crick with the letter.

“And now,” said Frampton to himself, sitting down to his desk, “I must get to work, and draw up that report Mr. Pelham has asked for. By-the-bye, what a sulky humour he was in this morning! I wish he would put himself into a passion at once, and have it out. But no, his angry feelings never burn up; they only smoulder. They never burst out into a jolly bright flame, but keep on emitting gloomy, grimy smoke. I would ten times rather be scorched than suffocated. I suppose that there has been another row between him and his brother, the duke, or that Carteret has been bullying both. Our present men are only a poor set. Not but that there is a fair amount of talent diffused among the lot; but it is so scattered and dispersed, so distributed—a little to each—that not one of them possesses ability beyond the average. It would be infinitely better if some were absolute noodles, and one or two of them master-minds.

Give me the good old times of Sir Robert Walpole. He was, indeed, a prime minister, —one who towered loftily above all the rest, who had a policy of his own and enforced it, whose rule was undisputed, who moved rapidly towards his ends, and carried every one else with him. Give me, too, his hard; bluff, hearty manner. There was no mistaking what it was he wanted. And if he did now and then get into a tremendous rage, strike the table boisterously with his fist, and rap out a volley of coarse oaths at you, yet the next minute, if you rose up to his mark, he would give you a broad jest, a roaring laugh, a hearty slap on the back with his big, heavy hand, and an invitation to a jolly dinner. But now one gets freezing civility, repelling bows, and sometimes a cutting sneer, provokingly veiled under the most courteous forms. Oh, those icy respectabilities! I hate them. They gall your feelings to the quick without the slightest violation of punctilious etiquette; and the bitter innuendo that maddens you is sheathed in honeyed words to which you can take no exception. As poison is sometimes administered in syrup, so do they convey an

affront through the medium of a compliment. They wound you both by what they say and what they leave unsaid. The former conveys in polished language the sharp sting; the latter furnishes, by a look or a shrug, the venom that distils through it. They stab you under the fifth rib with a face wreathed in smiles, and with eyes looking benignantlly into yours. But, bah! I am getting excited. That will never do. Shrink back, old Framp-ton, into the shell of formality, and mind that your report be properly clothed in the stiff and stately brocade of officialism."

CHAPTER VI.

LOPPS IS MADE THE BEARER OF MR. FRAMPTON'S
LETTER.

As Crick wended his way back to his lodge, he thought to himself,—

“All very fine, Mr. Frampton, but I know you of old. This note is about a King Charles spaniel, is it? Ha! ha! ha!” (imagine a silent guttural chuckle). “Tiptop clever man is Frampton. But he would not have been in such a mighty hurry for his son to get this if it was only about a little dog. Of course, he’s not such a fool as to blaze out ‘Important’ about anything. This office is not such a fool as to call things by their right names. This office is artful, it is. We are all sly here. Master’s a sly-boots, but I’m a sly-boots, too. Set a thief to catch a thief.

However, dog or no dog, I'll send his note off as quickly as I can. I hope I shall find that Longshanks has come back."

On reaching his room, Crick found, not the lagging Longshanks, but a visitor.

In the hope of gaining some further information about Brerewood, and of retrieving in some measure the defeat he had sustained on the previous occasion, Lopps had made a friendly call on Mr. Crick.

"Well, old fellow," said Lopps, "I was passing by, and I just looked in to say how d'ye do?"

"Passing by, were you?" replied Crick, avoiding to look pleased, though he was, for Lopps amused him. "Well, that is not half so flattering as if you 'd come on purpose."

"I didn't know you stood on forms, or I'd have come in a coach, with six long-tailed Flanders mares. Well, has Mr. Flipper, the hairdresser, called again?"

"Flipper? Flipper? Don't know such a man." At which they looked at each other with a twinkle, and indulged in a hearty laugh. "Come, young chap," said Crick, "you're not half a fool. Have you got the

banns up yet for that young woman as you were in love with?"

"Oh, lack-a-daisy me!" replied Lopps, assuming a lugubrious air. "Don't ask me. It makes me cry to think of it."

"What's the matter?"

"Could you have thought it? That jilt's been and run off to Jamaiky with that 'ere Marquis of Cholmondeley."

"Eh! who?"

"Why, that fat chap, you know, as lost one eye in the fight you told me of."

"Oh!" and they again twinkled at each other, and indulged in another uproarious laugh. "Ah, young man," said Crick, with solemnity, "when you have lived to be my age, you will learn how wrong it is to tell such fibs. Crammers ain't moral."

"No more ain't men—leastways, most of them—yet they still go on; and I s'pose when we are dead they'll go on going on. So will crammers."

"I think you have put it in the right light," said Crick, to whom Lopps's theory seemed quite satisfactory. "Pray take a pinch of my mixture. It's called Duke's dust, because it is

high dried, and patronized by three out of our eight dukes."

Lopps in return gave him a pinch of Paris rappee (a present from me), and of course each highly praised the other's snuff, while he found it detestable.

"By-the-bye," said Crick, "have you got to know all you wanted to know about that Mr. Br-r . . . something or other. Brerewood, wasn't it?"

"Yes!—no!"

Crick perfectly comprehended that the affirmative applied to the latter part of his question, and the negative to the former, and he went on,—

"You seemed very eager to get on his track, whoever he may be. What might you want with him?"

Lopps hated to have his brains sucked, though not averse to attempting that operation on others. He therefore answered,—

"Am I to be moral, and keep from crammers?"

"Certainly, at your age."

"Well, then, this Brerewood owes a cousin of mine three pund ten, and I want to get the money from him."

On hearing this Crick set to winking and blinking to an extent commensurate with the degree of incredulity he wished to express. But Lopps kept an impassive countenance, and his eyes were fixed with a persistent stare on an old engraving hung at the opposite wall representing Queen Anne with a globe in one hand and a sceptre in the other. The conversation at this period seemed to flag. Lopps renewed it by asking,—

“Do you chance to know, Mr. Crick, anything about this Mr. Brerewood?”

“I! How should I? I know nothing in the world about him except that, as you’ve told me, he owes your cousin 3*l.* 10*s.* But by-the-bye,” and a sudden thought seemed to strike him, “excuse me, Mr. Lopps, for a moment!”

He went out and made inquiry whether Longshanks had as yet come in, and found that neither that much-desiderated individual nor any other messenger had yet appeared. It naturally, therefore, occurred to Crick that he could not do better, in order to ensure a quick delivery of the note to young Mr. Frampton, than to entrust it to that gentle-

man's own servant. He therefore returned and asked Lopps,—

“Are you going home straight?”

Lopps, being rather vexed at Crick's impenetrability, feeling sure that his alleged ignorance of Brerewood was a “crammer,” answered snappishly,—

“Straight! How would you wish me to go—lopsided?”

“Now don't be huffy, Lopps. I want you to do me a favour?”

“With all my heart, Crick!” said Lopps, recovering his good humour.

“If you are going home at once I should be glad if you would take this note to your master. It is from his father, Mr. Frampton.”

“All right; I'll take it.”

“But if you have other calls to make, and will not be returning home for some time, I will send it on by messenger, as Mr. Frampton was particular as to its being delivered quickly.”

“Is it then so pressing?” asked Lopps.

“Oh, dear no!” hastily replied Crick, in humble but awkward imitation of his master's desire that the letter should not be considered

of importance, "not at all pressing—not in the least."

"I have only one call to make before I go home, and that will not keep me more than a quarter of an hour. Will that do?"

"Oh dear, yes! You must not run away with the idea that the letter is of any importance whatever."

"All right; then give it me."

"But you must be sure that you will not be detained more than a quarter of an hour. Mr. Frampton wants his letter delivered quickly, and, if it is not, he will snap my head off."

"Well, he'll have to make more than one bite of that big cherry! How could he snap it off? Why, them two cheeks of yours alone are plump enough to feed a litter of wolves for a week! Snap it off indeed!"

"A plague upon you lantern-jawed fellows! Skin and bone only make a mummy: it requires flesh and muscle to make a man. But will you take the letter?"

"Certainly. Give it me."

"Mind, it is of no importance whatever. In fact, Mr. Frampton told me confidentially

what it's about: it's only about a King Charles spaniel that he wishes his son to get for him."

"Well, if that's all, there's a mighty big fuss made about nothing."

"Fuss! Have I not told you that the letter is of no importance?"

"Yes; but you want me to run home with it all the way, like a dog that has stolen a leg of mutton from a butcher's shop."

"Oh, not at all! You may stop by the way for the quarter of an hour you spoke of, but no longer. Not that the letter is of any—"

"Good-bye!" said Lopps, cutting him short. And off he went with the letter.

As Lopps walked along, he moralized,—

"Now here's a chap that's spoony about this letter, 'cos it's a consarn of his own, while he was as sharp as a ferret's tooth on me the other day 'cos it was a consarn of mine. Same way I stood t'other day like a fool while he picked holes in my coat; and now that it's his turn to stand and have his coat looked at I find lots of holes in it for me to stick my thumb through. 'Cos why? 'Cos there's no coat that no man wears but has got some holes in

it, and each chap looks at t' other chap's coat 'stead of his own. Now I'll just go and say 'How d'ye do?' to Clary, as I told her I would."

Meanwhile Zillah had arrived home from her interview with us under the pseudonym of Dillon, and had narrated to her brother Philip all that had passed between us.

"Now that you have obtained their promise," said Philip, "that Lopps's evidence shall be used, I will convey that information to Father Delany, and ask him to meet us to-night, either here or in his own room, as he may think best."

"Do so, Philip; I am longing to know what his plans are."

"I will go at once."

"Stay one moment, Philip. Do you know who was that friend of young Frampton, who, I told you, was present at our interview?"

"No. You did not mention his name."

"Well, you remember Andrew Allerton, who lived with us at Paris, some—well, many years ago?"

"I remember the man; but his memory

recalls to me nothing but scenes of vice, degradation, and shame, which wring my soul when I think of them."

"Well, this Andrew Allerton—"

"Yes, yes, Andrew Allerton; I remember!" said Philip, whose mind, already somewhat excited by his sister's schemes for revenge against Brerewood, was the more keenly sensitive to the reminiscences which the name evoked. "Yes! the mention of that man recalls the memory of the old, old evil times."

"Well, brother," said Zillah, somewhat alarmed at Philip's increasing agitation, "let us say no more about him."

"Yes," continued he, giving way to the fiery impulses which, under the influence of certain trains of thought, became almost ungovernable, "the old, old evil times, when you lived a life of shame and sin with him, while I wallowed in moral filth, the vilest of the vile! Oh that man could sink so low!"

"Do not dwell on these things. I did not mean to revive—"

"But you have: the hateful vision is fully conjured up—Philip the drunkard, Philip the debauchee, Philip the blasphemer! My

former self stands vividly before me in all his hideous deformity. Am I not now the same he, only daubed and plastered and painted over to look fair on the outside? Or am I truly regenerated, and have I truly cast out the old man? Terrible doubts shake and thrill through my mind sometimes, and then—and then the former brutal Philip seems again to start into life, and the present harmless Philip to fade into unreality.”

“Dear Philip, do not indulge these morbid fancies. I regret that I ever alluded to a subject which—”

“Fancies!” wildly interrupted he; “which is the fancy? Is it Philip the degraded, as men saw me of old; or is it Philip the decent, as men see me now? Which is the fancy, and which the reality? True, the latter Philip tries to avoid evil and practise good—tries, Heaven knows, earnestly and sternly. But the old spirit lurks within, and, once aroused, struggles hard—O fearful struggle!—to regain the mastery. Then I am tempted—sorely, cruelly tempted—to look upon my old life as my real life, and my new life as a farce and an hypocrisy; to throw it

off, and be once more the old Philip, free, lawless, and defiant ! ”

Zillah was embarrassed. She had unwittingly raised a storm which she was powerless to quell. Indeed, her attempts had only increased its violence. Some minutes of silence ensued. Philip sat quietly, but his frame quivered with emotion.

Soon she saw him make the sign of the cross, and from his muttering lips and half-shut eyes she concluded that he was engaged in mental prayer. At the close he slightly raised his voice, and the following words became audible,—

“ *Et ne nos inducas in tentationem, sed libera nos a malo.* ”

He then opened his eyes and looked at her.

“ Philip,” she said to him, quietly, “ go to Father Delany.”

“ You are right, Zillah ! ” replied he, with more composure, “ I will go to him. He has often relieved me from similar assaults by praying with me and praying for me. He is not only my confessor and spiritual guide, but he is also an able and strong-minded man and a staunch and sympathetic friend. I will go

to him. Pray for me, Zillah!" and he went out.

Zillah remained pondering.

"Pray for him! As if it could do him any good, even if I knew how! In the true sense of the word, I have never prayed in my life. I have said prayers, but that, I take it, is quite a different thing. A most incomprehensible man is that brother of mine. Sincere to the extent of credulity, earnest to the extent of fanaticism, and kind hearted to the extent of self-sacrifice, he puts his whole trust in his blind faith; his faith leads him on to a shadowy hope, and his hope expands into a vague, aimless, indiscriminate charity for the world at large. Nevertheless, lo! there is a cankerworm gnawing at the heart of this model of virtue which all his godliness, his piety, and his prayers have not suppressed; while I, the graceless and profane, am free from its ravages. Am I to take this as a proof of my superiority over Philip? Or is his the curable disease which pain attends, while mine is the narcotic condition which drifts into death without an ache? That this will be known some day, he fully believes. And I? Well, I just think it

possible; yes, possible! And if it be so, then—why—oh, bother! I will go up to Marie!”

She accordingly went upstairs, and found that she had just been preceded by Lopps. He was on his way home after his visit to Crick, and, having had a few minutes' sweet converse with dear little Clary in the coffee-room and in the small cabinet adjacent to it, he had now come up to pay his respects to her mother.

Mrs. Centry gave her usual genial welcome to both him and Zillah.

“Stay and take a cup of coffee with us, Mr. Lopps,” said Mrs. Centry, who liked him for his good sense, uncouthly but pithily expressed, and for his good feeling, always directed (though sometimes through the wrong means) to the right aims.

“Kind thanks, Mrs. Centry,” replied Lopps, “but I've got a note to give to master.”

“Well, if it is pressing, I won't detain you.”

“Oh, it don't press much; it's only from old Frampton to his son.”

Zillah wondered what it was about.

“Oh, Mr. Lopps,” said she, “you must not

refuse a lady's offer. Besides, I want a word or two with you."

"Well, Mr. Dillon, p'raps you're right. I won't say nay to your cup, Mrs. Centry. It's bad luck to say nay to a lady."

"But still worse luck," said Zillah, "for a gentleman to have nay said to him by a lady: is it not so, Mr. Lopps?"

"Right you are," answered he.

At this moment Mrs. Centry brought him his cup of coffee. In his polite anxiety to relieve her from it, he rose hastily, and, in the transfer from her hands to his, it unfortunately slipped, and, falling on the table, its contents inundated the neat green baize that covered it, and some part of the rich, whity-brown *café au lait* went to impart its peculiar tinge to the grey drugget that adorned the floor.

Lopps was horrified at his clumsiness. He poured himself out in humble apologies, making convulsive efforts all the time to stop the flood with his hands; and these being utterly ineffectual, he wildly whipped out his pocket-handkerchief, and began slopping up the streaming liquid on the table. In his hurried

extraction from his pocket of his handkerchief, Mr. Frampton's letter had been extracted along with it, and had fallen on the floor in the midst of a small pool of coffee. No one noticed this but Zillah. A napkin happened to be lying on a small round table in a corner. Quick as lightning she seized it, unfolded it, and laid it flat on the floor over the spot where the letter was lying and the coffee was spilt. She then patted it over with her feet to hasten its absorption of the liquid, and left it there.

"Many thanks, Mr. Dillon," said Mrs. Centry. "Kindly leave the cloth where you have put it, and it will sop up the wet from my drugget. Don't say a word more about it, Mr. Lopps. It was quite as much my fault as yours. There's no harm done, except that you have lost your cup of coffee. I'll get you another at once."

"Not for the world, Mrs. Centry, thank you kindly. I've quite stayed out my time, and must be off. I'll have no more slips 'tween the cup and the lips to-day. So I'll go on my way now, as I ought to have done afore I made a fool of myself and a mess of your carpet. Good-bye, Mrs. Centry."

“Good-bye, Mr. Lopps; but I’m going downstairs too, to fetch a dry towel or two, so come along.”

“Good day, Mr. Dillon.”

“Good day, Mr. Lopps. I have not yet had my intended word or two with you; but I’ll not detain you now, and will wait for another opportunity.”

As soon as the two had left the room, Zillah stooped down, took the letter from beneath the napkin, replaced the latter carefully, and flew to her bedroom with her prize.

CHAPTER VII.

FATHER DELANY'S PLAN OF CAMPAIGN.

IN the evening Philip brought Father Delany ; and, as on the former occasion, the presence of Mrs. Centry and Clary was dispensed with, so that the three alone remained in private conference. Philip seemed to have quite regained, under the influence of prayer self-communing and Father Delany's ministrations, his usual calm serenity. The only trace that remained of the moral tempest by which he had so lately been agitated was a certain gravity in his manner almost approaching to sternness.

Father Delany was the first to speak.

"My daughter," he said, "your worthy brother has told me that you have secured permission for us to use the evidence of the serving-man in the matter of Mr. Brerewood's

intercourse with the Government functionaries."

"I have; but Mr. Frampton and Mr.—that is, his friend who was present, will require to know in what way that evidence will be made available."

"No doubt. Who is this friend? What is his name?"

"He resides with Mr. Frampton. His name is—is Allerton"; and she glanced uneasily at Philip, apprehensive of the effect which that name might have upon him, but he remained impassive.

"Do you know him? Is he a man of honour?"

"I have met him before, but he did not recognize me through my disguise. I believe him to be an honourable man."

"I do not like to have many confidants, but I suppose we must accept him."

"Have you now, my reverend father, matured your plan? What parts have you assigned to us in it? Has the time arrived for making us participators in your views?"

"Yes, my daughter, the time has arrived, and I crave your attention. If, either through

imperfect observation or through wilful misstatement, your accusation against Mr. Brerewood should prove to be a false one, the action which I propose taking will expose you to shame, reproach, and even to a certain amount of personal danger. I deem it right to warn you of this before I unfold my plan, and before you be committed to it."

"Thanks, father, for your warning; but it does not shake my determination. I believe that my eyes have not deceived me, and I am sure that I have not deceived you."

"Please to bear in mind," continued the priest, with stern solemnity, "that Mr. Brerewood has hitherto been deemed by our party and treated by them as an active supporter of, and a powerful worker in, the good cause—as a trusty friend and a dear brother. That has been his position in our party until now. You understand?"

"I understand."

"And now, suddenly and abruptly, you launch an accusation which points to him as a vile traitor, a monstrous perjurer, a ruthless foe, to be abhorred by God and man. Is it any less than that?"

“It is no less than that. I believe him to be that.”

“To believe is not enough. You must be very sure. Now listen. I intend to produce your evidence and that of your fellow-witness in such a form, at such a time, and under such circumstances as that, if guilty, his face, his manner, and most likely his words, shall avouch it. But if he can clearly rebut or explain away your testimony, and a reaction sets in, the weight of public indignation that would have fallen on him will be directed against his accusers.”

“Is it, then, before a public tribunal that the accusation will have to be made and answered?”

“Yes; and therefore it is that I warn you. Once the charge made, neither retraction nor apology will avail: you must stand or fall by it.”

“Zillah,” interposed Philip, “consider well the risk. You and Lopps can depose to having seen Brerewood enter Mr. Frampton’s office; that is all.”

“It is quite enough,” rejoined Father Delany, “provided that, when arraigned pub-

licely, abruptly, boldly, he should falter, hesitate, and fail to meet the charge readily and decisively. But otherwise it is not enough; and therefore it is, I repeat, that I give you this warning."

"But, of course," put in Zillah, "all hesitation and doubt would vanish if I could produce other and still more conclusive proof of Brerewood's guilt?"

"Of course it would."

"Then read this"; and she handed to the priest Frampton's letter to his son, which she had intercepted from Lopps.

He read it attentively. Then he read it aloud to Philip, laying particular stress on the passage in which Frampton alluded to his relations with Mr. Brerewood for a long time past having been "of so friendly and peculiar a nature," and to that in which he said, "it is, of course, of great political importance that my secret connexion with Mr. Brerewood should remain undivulged."

"How came you, madam," asked Father Delany, "to be possessed of this letter? I see that it bears to-day's date."

Zillah somewhat winced under the keen

glance of her reverend interrogator; but she quickly recovered, and answered, boldly,—

“Young Mr. Frampton’s servant, Lopps”—

“The man whose testimony is to corroborate yours?”

“The same. Well, he came here to-day, and inadvertently (perhaps—who knows?—purposely, at all events providentially) dropped this letter, which, no doubt, he was conveying to his master. When he had left I saw it on the floor, and, thinking that it was of no importance, I read it, but found that it was of great importance. I now place it in your hands.”

Father Delany paused. He rose, and paced the room in deep reflection. Meanwhile Philip exclaimed, impetuously,—

“Zillah, you have done an evil thing and a mean thing. You must seal this letter up again, and send it to its address. It is not yours to deal with.”

“Not mine?” warmly returned Zillah. “Well, perhaps not. No more is the dagger which may accidentally find its way into my hand when my enemy assails me; but I will use it, nevertheless.”

“The noblest purpose is dishonoured if achieved by dishonourable means.”

“Bah! A good end gained is a positive good that suffers no abatement from the foulness of the instrument that worked it. If the cankered branch be sawn off, what matters it whether the saw was rusty or not?”

“Can good come of evil?”

Father Delany here interposed. He had carefully weighed the matter in his mind, and had arrived at a decision.

“Children!” he said, in that earnest and emphatic manner of his which carried with it so much authority, “children! You are both right, and both wrong. Philip! the finger of Providence is in this; I dare not disregard nor spurn it. Zillah! you have committed a sin for which, when you confess it to your spiritual director, he will no doubt inflict on you a heavy penance. Your act in opening and retaining this letter is inexcusable in the eyes of God and, according to a code of morality which the world has established, is dishonourable in the eyes of men. But here is the weapon; we must use it.”

“Of course,” hesitatingly observed Philip,

“if you think, father, that the weapon which chance has placed in my sister’s hands, and her misconduct into ours, can—”

“Chance ! ” interrupted Father Delany, “that is a word for a pagan to use, not for a Christian. But let us for a moment assume this profane hypothesis of chance, and think it out. As a matter of probability, it was, say, 5 to 1, or 100 to 1, or an unknown quantity, which we may call x , to 1 against the elder Frampton writing to his son on such a delicate subject, instead of speaking to him about it. Then, again, it was x to 1 that he would send the letter by post, or by his own messenger, instead of sending it by Lopps (who, by-the-bye, was much more likely to be the bearer of a letter from the son to the father, than from the father to the son). Then, again, it is another x to 1 against Lopps calling at your house on his way home; another x to 1 against his dropping the letter on the floor and leaving it behind; another x to 1 against your sister finding it; another x to 1 against your sister being so indiscreet and improper as to open it; and another x to 1 against our being, at this precise moment, in

the precise position of wanting this precise kind of evidence. Now, the total adverse chances are x^7 to 1, and supposing the average of the unknown quantity to be only 10, you will find that the odds were 10,000,000 to 1 (on your own chance theory) against this conclusive evidence of Brerewood's guilt reaching us at this time. See what a many-linked chain of marvellous coincidences has to be mysteriously woven to bring about the result which you ascribe to chance! Why, if the mere natural sequence of events is to be our guide, it is only 2,000,000 to 1 that the sun will rise to-morrow. For, you see, the sun has only risen $365\frac{1}{4}$ times per annum for 6,000 years, and if you multiply—"

"Excuse me, reverend father; your abstruse calculations I am not competent to follow, but I yield to your conclusions."

Father Delany, whose object in this rhetorical display was to awe Philip into submissive acquiescence, did not appear to heed this interruption.

"If," continued he, "in favour of this false idol, Chance, you choose to eliminate Divine volition from the direction of events, you blasphemously dethrone Almighty God from the

government of the world! Believe me, Philip Centry, there is no such thing as chance; and each and every change, large or small, whether in the material or the moral world, of the millions of changes that are occurring here below at every moment of time, is the work of His all-pervading and omnipotent will. Yes! in the words of the great poet whom we have just lost,* and who, although a worldly man, was a faithful son of the holy Catholic Church,—

‘All Nature is but Art unknown to thee;

All chance direction, which thou canst not see.’”

He paused; nor did the other two break the silence that ensued. They would as soon have thought of interposing a remark in the middle of one of his addresses from the pulpit. It was for Father Delany to lower the high key at which he had pitched the discussion.

“Dear friends,” he said, “in thus expressing to you the thoughts that were passing in my mind, I wished you to see that I had not lightly or hastily arrived at the conclusion I have, namely, that we may and must confound our enemies with the weapons that have providentially been put in our hands.”

* Pope died in May, 1744.

“I may have done wrong,” said Zillah, “but I acted under a sudden and uncontrollable impulse. May my act be atoned for by the good which will result from it!”

“Father,” said Philip, “I bow to your decision.”

“’Tis well, my son. I will now give you a concise sketch of my plan. On Friday next, some of the most active, though not perhaps the most prominent and distinguished, leaders of His Majesty James III.’s adherents will meet in conference at the little chapel in Turnagain Alley, Fetter Lane. I am one of the committee, each member of which has the privilege of bringing two or three friends. I will introduce you, or, which will be the same thing, will give you passes. I shall watch an opportune moment, and when I give you the signal, you, Philip Centry, shall rise, and in a loud voice shall accuse Martin Brerewood of being a traitor to the cause of which he has so long been the professed and trusted advocate. Will you perform your part?”

Philip hesitated. For many years he had led a peaceful and prosperous life under the shelter of British law. Fervent a Catholic as

he was, and in consequence well disposed to the Stuart dynasty, he had scrupulously abstained hitherto from taking any active part in politics. Was it for an adequate object that he was now suddenly called upon to step out from the ranks of private life, and put himself forward before the world as a public accuser? And of whom? Of a man connected (if he was not belied) with the ruling Government. And of what? Of that very connexion as of a crime of the deepest dye. Was it for him, an alien living in this country on sufferance, a guest, as it were, enjoying this country's hospitality, to arise, and by an overt act to proclaim hostility to, and, so to say, declare war against, its existing institutions? Again, was it right (but this occupied only a second place in his mind) towards his wife and daughter to compromise their future by involving himself in a political struggle of which the issue might prove disastrous to their fortunes?

Father Delany was too shrewd and too great an adept in the art of reading men's minds not to form a very accurate notion of the tenor of Centry's thoughts.

"My son," said he, "you are weighing

your private against your public duties. I say public duties, for I call on you for no less dignified an end. If it had been merely a question of your sister's private grievances against this Brerewood, I should have repressed, not encouraged, any disposition which you might have evinced to resort to strong measures on her behalf. Such an end would not have justified such means. But the actual case stands on much higher grounds. This man, by a long course of black treachery, has already done infinite injury to the cause of God and the public weal. Is this ferocious wolf still to be allowed to ravage the faithful flock, when we have it in our power to rend from his back the sheep's clothing which alone makes him dangerous? There might be, you may suggest, some other way of exposing his true character? None so speedy, so effectual, so complete. He must be arraigned personally and publicly, that all may at once know his guilt; and he must be taken by surprise, lest he have time to forge some plausible lie that may gull the simple. Yes, this necessary work must be done! This Judas must be thoroughly unmasked! We alone can do it. Shall we shrink from the task?"

“Since so it is,” replied Philip, moved by the priest’s words, “and you appoint me to the task, I will undertake it.”

Father Delany, who highly appreciated the depth and truth of Philip Centry’s character, and entertained the sincerest personal regard for him, was pleased with his ready acquiescence, and hastened to reassure him as to the consequences to himself that he might apprehend from this step.

“You have decided rightly, my son, and I shall see that no evil to you or yours comes from it. All I want is that you should take the initiative, and publicly put forth the accusation. To that your part will be confined. I undertake the rest. I will produce the witnesses and elicit their testimony. Leave all to me. You can then withdraw from public attention, and even your name need scarcely be known.”

“Do not do this,” replied Philip, “merely to spare me. What I engage I am ready to perform in its entirety. Do that which is best for the cause, not that which is best for me.”

“Well conceived and well said, my son. I

shall put you to a further strain if the need arises, but not otherwise."

Zillah had grown rather impatient during this lengthened discussion. She could hardly understand, much less appreciate, either Philip's scruples or Father Delany's elaborate efforts to dispel them. The priest's struggles between his innate sense of honour (a worldly consideration) and the requirements of policy (a religious consideration), and the gradual submission of Philip's own feelings to his friend's views, so powerfully urged, so solemnly expressed, were mental processes quite beyond her observation. She could not make quite sure whether this discussion truthfully reflected the inner thoughts of her two companions, or whether it were a mere comedy, in which the actors made a hollow show of being led by each other into a course which each had previously determined on—a sham resistance to a foregone conclusion.

She now burst in, rather scornfully, with,—

"Since, at last, you two have determined on the course to be adopted, pray let us condescend to enter into details. How am I to secure the evidence of the serving-man, Lopps?"

Is he to be at the meeting? How is he to get there?"

"Madam," replied Father Delany, with a courteous smile that operated as a rebuke to her abruptness, "your practical good sense suggests questions which are though trivial yet necessary, and to which I was about to address myself. You must be kind enough to call on Mr. Frampton, jun., and arrange that Mr. Allerton shall attend with this Lopps at the little chapel in Fetter Lane on Friday evening."

"Mr. Allerton?" asked Zillah, with some surprise.

"Yes. If I did not mistake you, it is Mr. Allerton whom you understood to be at feud with Martin Brerewood, and not his friend."

"True; it is so."

"Besides, it would be better that young Frampton be not present, as it is a letter addressed to him, that was intercepted, which will—"

"Oh, yes; I understand. Besides, his father's name will be introduced, and will, I fancy, not be received with favour. But if I

induce Mr. Allerton to come, how will he and the servant obtain admittance?"

"Give me some paper, Mr. Centry, if you please."

He then wrote two passes. They were addressed, "Ad Dominam Horrebow," and underneath was this diagram—

Introibo	ad
altare	Dei.

"With these they will be enabled to pass the door. You will be so kind, my daughter, as to watch for their coming and introduce them to me, and I will tell them what to do. You had better explain to them fully what course it is intended to adopt, for otherwise Mr. Allerton may hesitate to form one of an assembly composed of men whose creeds, both religious and political, are so diametrically opposed to his own."

"Your instructions are clear, and shall be obeyed. I shall call on Mr. Allerton early to-morrow morning."

"You will also mention my name, and tell him the part which I am to take in the pro-

ceedings, so that, when we meet, he may be prepared to leave his servant Lopps under my guidance."

Zillah was enchanted to find that Father Delany had provided for the minutest details of the scheme, and augured well of its success.

"He could not only preach," thought she, "but act."

She was now in her element. Plots and intrigues had charms for her beyond the mere accomplishment of the object they had in view, just as an enthusiastic surgeon feels a professional pleasure in the mere act of performing a delicate and hazardous operation, irrespectively of the benefit he hopes to confer on his patient.

At Father Delany's request she handed him Frampton's letter, and it was agreed that it was to be left to him to make such use of it, and at such time, as he might deem fit. And all the requisite arrangements having been made, they parted.

CHAPTER VIII.

LOPPS IN TROUBLE FOR THE LOSS OF THE LETTER.

THAT same evening I was enjoying myself all alone in our sitting-room, reading for the third or fourth or, for anything I could positively remember, for the eighth or tenth time a delicious letter I had received that day from Alice. Charley had gone to the play with some friends, having in vain pressed me to join them, and would not be home till late. No entertainment, however tempting, could lure me away from the delightful task I had set for myself of answering Alice's letter; but although pen, ink, and paper lay invitingly before me, although I had already read that charming letter an indefinite number of times, and almost knew it by heart, I could not somehow get to write beyond a few introductory

words, such as "My darling Alice! I cannot adequately express the—" To find the right word to be inserted next, it was positively necessary to read her letter over again. In doing so, I met with passages that set me thinking instead of writing. For instance, she says, "Why do you so frequently harp on the name of Brerewood? One would fancy, silly boy, that you were jealous. If so, it may be a proof of your love, but it is none of your judgment. Once for all I tell you that I dislike him as much as I like you. Nay, hardly so much either, for my liking for you expands into love, while my dislike to him does not expand into hatred. Does he dare to make love to me? you ask. Well, a little; but not such flaring, gushing, saucy love as you, sir, made to me. I give him no chance, for I take care never to be left alone with him. In my mother's presence he can only shoot a stray glance which misses its aim, as my eye does not meet it, or waft a passing compliment which falls on unheeding ears, or sigh out a vague aspiration too faint to reach its mark. So no more of him, I beseech you."

Did ever lovely girl so cleverly and tenderly

seek to allay the apprehensions of an absent and anxious lover? In the thankfulness of my heart, and the plenitude of my triumph over Brerewood, I almost came to pity him. If his love for Alice were but a tithe of my own, with what dark despair must her preference for me overshadow and oppress his mind! Poor devil! was it his fault that she was so fair? Was it a crime deserving such a punishment that he appreciated her grace and beauty? That peerless prize was awarded to me; could I withhold my sympathy from my discomfited competitor? As these thoughts were ranging through my mind, Lopps entered with a letter for me. It ran as follows:—

“SIR,—We beg that you will accept of our humble apologies for not having sooner answered your letter. The delay has arisen from the necessity of our all meeting together in order to do so, which could not be accomplished till to-day. We have now to say that we not only refuse to retract and apologize, but herewith reiterate our charge against you. Mr. Brerewood will be most happy to receive your friend, Mr. Frampton, and to make the

requisite arrangements with him for a meeting. We have the honour to be, &c.,

“ M. BREREWOOD. J. BIGSHOW.

“ A. GORDON. F. GAYLEY.

This letter gave rather a sudden shock to my new-born feelings of commiseration for Brerewood. In my blissful dreams of love I had forgotten the rugged realities of life. In fact, it had quite escaped me that I had no less than four affairs of honour on my hands. That villain Brerewood, for whom, for a moment, I had grown tender hearted, had by his treachery and calumnies weaved a net round me through which I must break by sheer force, and for that all my energies, physical and mental, would be required.

“ This is no world
To play with mammals and to tilt with lips :
We must have bloody noses and crack'd crowns.”

I would see that Charley called at once on Brerewood, and this evening I would devote to writing a rapturous effusion to dear Alice. I had barely taken the pen in hand for that purpose, when Lopps entered the room. He came in slowly and shyly, and there was a sheepish

expression in his countenance, quite at variance with his usual smart, open manner.

“Well, Lopps,” I asked, “what’s the matter? Is the plate-basket stolen, or has any one run away with little Clary?”

“Please, sir, may I ask was that there note for Mr. Frampton?”

“For Mr. Frampton?” I replied, as I mechanically turned up the letter to look at the address. “No; it was for me. Why do you inquire?”

“’Cos then I’m in a mess.”

“What do you mean,—if that letter is for me then you are in a mess?”

“That’s it, sir; ’tis so.”

“What the deuce have you to do with this letter?”

“’Cos,” illogically replied Lopps, “it’s not the letter which I ought to have brought, and which I ought to have given to Mr. Frampton, and not to you.”

“Do you mean to say that you have brought up the wrong letter?”

“Oh, it’s the right letter enough as far as you’re consarned, but the wrong one as far as I am.”

“Well, then,” I said, mystified, “bring up the right one.”

“That’s easy to say, sir; but I can’t.”

“Well, then, don’t. What do you mean, Lopp, by this cock-and-a-bull story?”

“Beg pardon, sir, but I’m a little muddled just now. Fact is I never did such a thing before.”

“Do you mean to say that you have been drinking?”

“Nothing on earth, sir, but a cup of coffee; and that I didn’t drink, for I spilt it.”

“Oh, well, a cup of coffee that you did not drink could not have hurt you. Then what is it that you never did before?”

“I never lost a letter before.”

“Have you lost a letter, then?”

“Why, that’s what I’ve been telling you of all along.”

“Well, it might have been what you meant, but it was not what you said. However, never mind now. As I understand it, you have lost a letter intended for your master, and you came up to inquire whether mine was his, or referred to it?”

“Well, there was just a chance it might have got shoved into yours somehow.”

“How did this letter for Mr. Frampton come?”

“It didn’t come at all. I brought it—at least, part of the way.”

“Part of the way? Well, then, where did you leave it?”

“I didn’t leave it; it left me.”

“Hang it, man, you would tire out the patience of a saint! If you want my advice, tell me all the facts distinctly.”

He then told me how, having called at the Secret Service Office, with a view to learn something more about Brerewood, Crick had entrusted to his care a letter from Mr. Frampton to his son; how he had called nowhere, except at Philip Centry’s for a few minutes; and, finally, how, when he arrived home, he had searched in vain in all his pockets for the letter, and could not find it.

After hearing his story, I thought it very probable that he might have dropped the letter at the Centrys’, in which case it would be quite safe (for, of course, it was only afterwards that I became acquainted with

Zillah's manœuvres); and I advised him to go at once to the Turk's Head, and ascertain if the letter were there. If not, I feared very much that it must have dropped from his pocket in the street; and I ended by expressing a hope that it was not of great importance.

"Oh, I know pretty well," said Lopps, "what it was all about."

"The deuce you do!" I exclaimed. "I hope, Mr. Pelopidas" (an appellation only used when he was under reproof), "that you are not in the habit of prying into the letters of your employer."

"Oh, please don't call me names, Mr. Allerton," cried he, beseechingly; "and don't think me such a sneak as that! Crick told me."

"Crick! And how did Crick know?"

"Old Frampton told him."

"What! told Crick the house-porter?"

"Oh, bless you, Crick's quite a great man at that office. Monstrous 'cute man is Crick. Frampton couldn't get on at all without Crick."

"And what," I asked, though remaining

very sceptical as to this person's immense importance in the office, "did Crick say were the contents of this letter?"

"Oh, he said that Frampton had told him that it was of no consequence at all, and was only about a puppy-dog that he wanted his son to get for him."

"About what? A puppy-dog? Well, if that be true, it is about the last thing that I should have expected Mr. Frampton to write to his son about."

"Funny, sir, ain't it?"

"It is far more likely that this clever Crick that you talk about has been making a fool of you."

"Not so sure that he ain't," muttered Loppes. "Twouldn't be the first time."

"Then you had better proceed at once to Mr. Centry's, and inquire about your letter."

"Thank ye, sir; I'll go. I did mean to before I came up to ask you."

On Monday, the next morning but one, I was cosily sipping my cup of chocolate, when Mr. Dillon was announced. Charley was, of course, not down yet. His aversion to going

to bed at night was only exceeded by his aversion to getting out of it in the morning.

I bade Lopps show Mr. Dillon up to me, and tell his master that he must at once rise, throw on a few things, and join us in his dressing-gown and slippers. I felt pleased that Dillon had kept his word, and received him cordially.

"Mr. Dillon," I said, after inviting him to be seated, "I felt sure that your promise to repeat your visit to us would be fulfilled, and I am glad to see you."

"I am equally glad to find by your reception of me that my visit is neither unexpected nor unwelcome."

"I expect that Mr. Frampton will join us in two or three minutes; and till then we had, perhaps, better defer entering on the subject that has brought you here. Meanwhile, do me the favour of taking a cup of chocolate."

"Thanks; I will not refuse your kind offer."

"I presume," said I, after a short pause, "that it is not very long since you left Jersey, Mr. Dillon?"

"You are quite right. I have only been in

England a short time; and, if I am correctly informed, it is only recently that you have taken up your abode with Mr. Frampton?"

"You have been correctly informed. It is only quite recently."

Another pause.

"If I understood you aright," resumed Mr. Dillon, "I believe you said on the occasion of my first visit that your hostility to Mr. Brerewood arose out of a private quarrel between you and him, and that Mr. Frampton was only an indirect party to it?"

"Mr. Frampton has no personal concern in it whatever beyond the interest which his friendship prompts him to take in my affairs."

Another pause, which to my great relief was broken into by the appearance of Charley, whom Lopps had succeeded in rousing into activity.

"Happy to see you, Mr. Dillon," cried he; "is your scheme matured? Are you going to strip it of that husk of mystery with which you enveloped it at our last meeting, and shall we now see the kernel of it?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Dillon, readily; "I am come to unfold to you the entire plan of cam-

paign with which, as allies, you have a full right to be acquainted."

He then proceeded to impart to us such of its details as Father Delany had authorized him to lay before us. We listened with great attention.

"An excellent plot!" exclaimed Charley, in his usual sportive strain; "a capital plot, full of dramatic effects! Nothing in Dryden or Nat Lee to equal it. I fancy I see the truculent tyrant, Brerewood, standing with folded arms and scowling mien, triumphant in his malice, when lo! a box opens, and out pops a *deus ex machinâ* in the shape of Lopps, at whose appearance Brerewood collapses and sinks confounded, demolished and annihilated! Oh, it's grand! I only see one objection: it won't succeed."

"Why not, pray?"

"Simply because the means are inadequate to the end. Brerewood may for a moment be taken by surprise; but he is as cunning as a fox, as tough as a cat, and as spry as a weasel, and he will overbear and trample down your slight evidence."

"Slight as you pronounce it to be, I believe

that, what with the suddenness of the charge, its nature, and the jealous distrust in leaders which characterizes the people before whom it will be made, our evidence will be sufficient for the purpose. But, to set your mind completely at ease on that score, permit me to inform you that I am assured by Father Delany that, in case of the necessity arising, he will produce written evidence of such a character as shall dispel every possible doubt as to Brerewood's guilt."

"Father Delany will produce? Then you are not aware of the nature of this written evidence?"

"It is in the hands of Father Delany alone, but I am as convinced of its existence as if I held it in my own."

"Excuse my questions and criticisms, Mr. Dillon; they are, I hope, pardonable under the circumstances."

"I not only excuse, but court them."

"Good! I presume that Father Delany is a Catholic priest; is he a Jesuit?"

"That I do not know; but this I can vouch for, that he possesses ability, earnestness, and energy far above the average."

“Well, we have splendid materials for a drama : we have a secret political meeting, we have a mysterious piece of evidence, and one of the chief personages is a crafty Jesuit ; why, all we need now to complete the *dramatis personæ* is to have a clever woman or two concerned in it.”

“That element may not be wanting either, for aught we know.”

“Well, it is hard upon me that I am to be shut out of the fun. I should very much like to see the *dénouement*.”

“I fear that cannot be. I was instructed by Father Delany—”

“The stage-manager ?”

“Call him so, if you like. I was to insure the attendance of Lopps, at all events, and that of Mr. Allerton was to be allowed, if he wished it. The passes are limited to those two.”

“I shall certainly be there,” said I. “I shall attend with Lopps, and shall be happy to act in concert with Father Delany, to whom you will introduce me on our arrival.”

“It will be well for you to wear a cloak with which to shade your face, lest Brerewood

should prematurely recognize you and take the alarm."

"Oh, by all means wear a cloak!" cried Charley; "it is the conventional costume of a conspirator. A slouched hat and a dark lantern might not be amiss."

"Particulars of time and place," added Dillon, totally disregarding Charley's banter, "I have written on the back of the passes. I shall fully rely on seeing you on Friday. Till then, adieu!" and he left us.

CHAPTER IX.

I AM IMPATIENT FOR THE FRAY.

“WHAT do you think of this scheme, Charley?” asked I, when we were alone.

“I think that something will come of it,” replied he. “That man is in earnest, I am sure; and so, I fancy, is the Jesuit.”

“You put it in so ludicrous a point of view that Dillon must have thought your opinion adverse to the plan.”

“I did so partly because it is in my instincts to seize on weak points and jeer at them, just as mildew fastens on diseased twigs, and partly in order to elicit what our friend might have to say on the other side.”

“Then your conclusion is?”

“My conclusion is that, if they have some additional and weighty evidence in reserve, it

may go very hard with Mr. Brerewood the double faced."

"Well, I think so too. But do you know, Charley, that I have it strongly on my mind to save Brerewood from the dangerous and humiliating position in which Friday's exposure will place him?"

"How now, you eccentric philosopher? What new maggot is boring holes in your brain? All flame and fury yesterday, you to-day propose taking your enemy under your protecting wing!"

"Not in order to save him from punishment, but in order to inflict that punishment myself—"

"I see; you wish to kill him with kindness."

"Not at all. I mean that my rapier's point to-morrow may prevent his attendance at the meeting on Friday. Read this."

And I handed him the letter which I had received from Brerewood and his three confederates.

"Just so," he observed after reading it, "the correctest form of polite punctilio—humble apologies and renewal of insult. They

have the honour, &c., and bid you mortal defiance: the usual mixed odour of rose-water and blood."

"You must be kind enough, Charley, to call on Mr. Brerewood. Let him fix his own time and place, but let it come off before Friday."

"Nonsense, man! Let the Jesuit have the first lunge at him. If he succeeds, Brerewood is punished by the taint of dishonour far more effectually than he would be if you sheathed your sword in his body up to the hilt."

I could not but feel the justice of Charley's observation, but my passions were so roused, and I had so set my mind on being myself the avenger of my own wrongs, that it seemed as though I were defrauded of my just rights if others wreaked on Brerewood the chastisement that he so richly deserved at my hands.

"No, Charley," I exclaimed, "'tis not for me to stand aside and ignobly wait while others strike the blow which I ought to strike myself. I would as soon think of hiring a bravo, as they do in Italy, to do my work. Let public wrongs seek a public reparation ;

my quarrel is a private one, and must be privately adjusted."

"I do not agree with you, Frank. Here is a man who has made others believe you guilty of a dishonourable act, while he is himself the author of the very act which he has imputed to you. He is about to be publicly exposed, and his exposure will set you right in the eyes of all. But now you want to prevent that exposure of his villainy, and that justification of your innocence, by fighting him. For if you kill him, he is spared the exposure; and if he kills you, what becomes of your justification?"

"My memory, Charley, will be free."

"Bother your memory!" cavalierly interrupted Charley; "I hate to think of it! A dead man with an unstained memory is all very well, but a living man with an unstained name is a thousand times better. I infinitely prefer you in the latter character; and as you have the choice, I hope that you will adopt it."

"Your reasoning, friend Charley, is ingenious, but sophistical. For the substance of your argument is of nearly universal applica-

tion to all settlements of private quarrels by the sword, and therefore impugns that code of honour by which society is regulated. Now you cannot, of course, mean to go so far as that; *ergo* your argument proves too much."

"I did not mean to go to any such lengths. But it is of no use arguing with you. You have the trick of fence. I feel; you reason. I appeal to common sense; you resort to logic. I deal you out a light thrust, and you *ripostez* with a heavy *Barbara celarent*, something or other—*baralipton*. I know you are wrong, but, nevertheless, I will do your bidding. Fight, then, if you like."

"Do not be vexed, Charley. You are a kind heart and true as steel. Your instinct jumps like a grasshopper, and frequently alights on the right spot. My reason crawls towards it syllogistically, and sometimes misses it."

"If the serpent were to creep up to its prey, instead of darting at it, he would go to bed supperless."

"I'll tell you what, Charley, I offer you a compromise."

“The half-way house between right and wrong.”

“Rein in your prancing wit, you chatter-box, and listen. I will agree to this. Brerewood is to appoint the time of meeting. If he should fix it for some day subsequent to Friday, I authorize you to consent. But it must be of his own accord; and you must say nothing in the slightest degree suggestive of it.”

“All right, Frank, I will go to Brerewood this afternoon, and adhere strictly to the letter of my instructions.”

“And now, Charley, having arranged this little matter, had we not better tell Lopps what will be expected of him on Friday?”

“Very well. Now or later does not much matter. Let us call him up, if you like.”

“Better prepare him in good time.”

“I have just been giving him a smart scolding for losing a letter sent me by my father. Not that it much signifies, unless it contained money, which is not at all likely, for my quarterly allowance is not due for a month yet.”

I rang the bell, and Lopps answered the summons.

Charley addressed him with,—

“Here! you faithless postman, you mail-bag with a hole in it!—you leaky vessel!—you cracked jug!—you—”

“Stay, Charley! I thought that you had already given Lopps a sharp lecture on his carelessness. You should not repeat the dose.”

“Oh, this is only a little playful thunder to follow the lightning with which I scorched him before.”

“Pray, sir,” said Lopps, addressing me, “don’t stop him! I like it. You see, Mr. Frampton has quite a right to take his letter’s worth out in hard words. It’s a debt like as I owe, and ev’ry fresh fling wipes out so much. The more he butts at me the sooner it will be paid. There won’t be much left due to-night, if you will but let him go on now: short accounts make long friends.”

“Say you so, saucebox? Then I’ll reserve the balance to take out of you to-morrow.”

“Now listen, Lopps,” said I, “we have some work for you to do next Friday.”

“No more letters to fetch and carry, I hope, sir.”

"No. You will have to speak, which we know you can do pretty glibly."

"Yes, sir, I'm more up to that."

"You will have to give public evidence to the effect that you saw Mr. Brerewood enter the Secret Service Office a few days before,—that he went in as one who was familiar with its ways, and that he stayed there some time."

"All that, sir, I can say and stick to."

"Mr. Dillon will be there, who will give the same testimony, and you will have to corroborate his evidence."

"I s'pose you mean, sir, one down, the other come on. All right."

"You will," interposed Charley, "accompany Mr. Allerton to the place in question, and take his orders as to what you are to do."

"Very glad indeed, sir, to serve under Cap'n Allerton."

"And now I think that I will go and finish dressing."

As Zillah (for we will only call her Mr. Dillon when she is addressed by others under that name) was returning from her interview

with us, her thoughts assumed very much the following shape:—

“The affair promises well. So, so, Mr. arch-traitor Brerewood! you think you have outwitted me, do you? You little suspect the mine which I am springing under your feet. I wonder how he will look,—what he will say,—what he will do! Well, I shall have had my revenge, though I do not see what else I shall gain by my trouble in this matter. I shall have to get back to France, and live by my wits, as before. ’Tis not a very magnificent destiny that my wits have worked out for me so far. Heigh ho! I sometimes wish that I were an insignificant well-to-do coffee-house keeper, like my brother Philip. I might then doze away through life, without fears, aye, and without hopes. Would that suit me? Bah! It would be like making every meal off milk-porridge. Very wholesome, no doubt, but very disgusting. There would be no more high-seasoned dishes, such as the one my retaliation on Brerewood is preparing for my craving palate. Well, let me at all events enjoy this, even if I live on bread and water ever afterwards. What a strange chance it is

that young Allerton should unexpectedly turn up in my path! He seems really a nice lad. How excited Philip grew when I alluded to this young man's father! That's the worst of having a sickly, delicate conscience; it gets squeamish and upset on the slightest provocation. Now mine is a sound, healthy, robust conscience, which the memory of past indulgences and old peccadilloes does not in the least disturb. If Philip could get up a good tough conscience like mine it would be ever so much the better for him, poor fellow!"

When she arrived home and went up to the common sitting-room, she there found Mrs. Centry mending one of her daughter Clary's dresses. There were so few points of resemblance, or objects of common interest, between these two ladies, that, though treating each other with regard and kindness, their conversations rarely extended to any but the most ordinary topics. But on this occasion they each had in their minds a subject to broach which supplied materials for a more confidential interchange of thought.

"Dear Zillah," said Mrs. Centry, "Will you kindly assist me? Philip has something on

his mind, and I believe it to be connected with your affairs."

"Has he then not told you?"

"No; and I make it a point never to inquire as to matters he does not disclose to me of his own accord. It would be like reproaching him for his silence."

"You are wonderfully discreet, Marie!"

"Nay, more artful than discreet; for I am sure that in this way I get to know more in the long run."

"And now you wish to learn from me what you do not wish to ask your husband."

"Oh, no, no! You mistake me. I want no information from you. I want to give you information and to crave your co-operation. Pray listen. You are perhaps aware to some, but not to the full, extent of Philip's peculiarities. He is acutely, morbidly sensitive, and at moments when excited he is impulsive beyond self-control. It is necessary for his health, moral as well as physical, that he be not subjected to violent emotions, particularly in reference to religious or political topics."

"Surely you describe a weak man, and Philip is not such."

“No; I am describing a strong man, whose consciousness of strength is his danger. It exalts zeal into passion, and impels him, when thoroughly roused, to burst through the pale of conventionality.”

“He appears to me cool and prudent enough.”

“Alas! you know him not. In the moods which I have described, his old, old fierceness, which time, reflection, and especially religion have repressed but not entirely subdued, regains a temporary ascendancy, and his moral struggles react fearfully on his physical health. That is what I wanted to tell you. Spare him, Zillah, spare him, if you love him!”

“Why, you foolish Marie, you speak as if Philip were a Knight of the Round Table, whom I, a disconsolate damsel, was urging to wage battle with some formidable giant.”

“That he should assist you and protect you is but natural and right; but pray, dear Zillah, put him to no task that might subject him to the evils I have indicated.”

“Quiet your apprehensions, Marie; what he is doing for me . . . shall I tell you what it is ?”

“No, no; do not tell me anything. Only promise me that you will bear in mind the warning I have given you.”

“I promise that. I did not think that Philip had been so thin-skinned. But, as I was about to say, what he is doing for me is a very simple matter, and in three or four days it will have been done. Till then, do not either fear or grudge trusting him with me.”

“All the less that I know that good Father Delany is in your counsels. That cannot be wrong in which he takes a part.”

“And now, Marie, that your mind is relieved on that point, I want to ask you a question. Do you remember the two children to which you acted as nurse for me when in Paris?”

“Oh, yes! Your own poor little Frederick died, and the other—”

“My own died; well, yes, and as you were saying, the other—do you know what became of him?”

“Yes; the curly-headed François. Soon after we came to England I made inquiries, and learnt that he had been brought up by his uncle, Mr. Uppenham, with whom I believe he is still living.”

“Are you at all aware that on Mr. Allerton’s return to Paris, when you had left, a rumour reached him that it was Francis Allerton, his legitimate son, that had died, and that the survivor was in reality my own son Frederick?”

“I am not aware of any such rumour, and, if it existed, you and I well know how completely it was devoid of foundation.”

“Well, yes; but somehow Mr. Allerton got it into his head that it was true.”

“How is it possible? For, if I was correctly informed, he himself took the boy and left him under the guardianship of Mr. Uppenham, as being Frank Allerton, his legitimate son.”

“Mr. Allerton was not superstitiously scrupulous, and I suppose that, notwithstanding his doubts, he determined that his son, legitimate or not, should succeed to the family name and the miserable remnants of the family estate.”

“But you, no doubt, made it all clear to Mr. Allerton, and finally removed from his mind the erroneous impression created by that false report?”

“How that report originated,” replied Zillah, evading the question, “it would be curious to trace. You are sure, Marie, that nothing ever

dropped from you that could have led to it?"

"From me? Impossible. I knew the real facts too well to—"

At this moment Clary entered to ask some question connected with the business, and the conversation dropped. Zillah had, however, by this time obtained all the information that she required. She had been desirous of ascertaining how far Marie's recollections of the children she had nursed at Paris were vivid and precise. With what view she sought the information she had probably not yet herself determined. Whichever direction her shifty course might take, whether to leave me in, or release me from, my present false position, it was important for her to know what so powerful (so powerful because so credible) a witness as Mrs. Centry might have to depose if called upon.

"After all," thought she, "young Allerton is not so bad a fellow. It is true that he did most uncivilly and scornfully reject me as a mother, when I did him the honour of announcing myself as such. He did not take to me. I did not at all seem to suit him as a parent. His conduct as a supposed son was

most unnatural and unfilial. If I had been an ogress he could not have repulsed my maternal advances with more horror. But some allowance must be made for the abruptness of the revelation. A man does not like to be roughly roused out of a pleasant dream in order to be told of an unpleasant reality. It must naturally have startled him when I said to him, in substance, ‘ You fancy your mother was Henriette, a wife and a good woman: not at all; your mother was Zillah, no wife, and not a good woman; and I am she.’ No wonder that he was a little put out. Let me see: if the matter should be broached to her, Marie will blurt out everything. I must just consider whether it might not be good policy to act the virtuous, and volunteer the truth, before its discovery rob me of the merit of spontaneous confession. However, time enough to think of that. At present Brerewood’s little affair must be attended to.”

CHAPTER X.

TIME AND PLACE SETTLED FOR THE DUEL.

THAT same afternoon, Charley called on Brerewood and found him at home. He was received with the most ceremonious courtesy, and the discussion of a matter of life and death was conducted in that light tone of pleasantry usual in such cases between thorough men of the world. It would have been in bad taste to display the slightest emotion on the one hand, or anything approaching to bravado on the other. On occasions of this nature it is etiquette to assume the coolest indifference and the most punctilious politeness.

“If it be agreeable to you and Mr. Allerton,” said Brerewood, with a gracious smile and in honeyed tones, “I should venture to suggest the fields behind Montagu House.”

“A more eligible spot could hardly, I think,

be found," replied Charley, gracefully bowing: "it is very quiet, and the views from it of Highgate and Hampstead in the distance are charming."

"It has also been the scene of many gallant rencounters, and I myself have used it once or twice."

"With such associations, it is rapidly becoming classic ground."

"I presume, Mr. Frampton, I may flatter myself that I shall have the honour of seeing you there as Mr. Allerton's friend?"

"Certainly, sir. Mr. Allerton has conferred on me the distinction of appointing me to that office."

"I shall be accompanied on the occasion by Mr. Frederick Gayley, whom probably you may know."

"I have not that honour. Is he of the Gayleys of Cornwall?"

"No; that is the junior branch of the family—a side-shoot from the main trunk. His people are the Gayleys of Rutlandshire—a very ancient house."

"I shall have much pleasure in making his acquaintance."

“You will find him a delightful person. I trust that you will agree with me that the cool of the morning is the most suitable time for these affairs?”

“I am not myself particularly addicted to early rising” (and there, certainly, Charley oke the truth); “but there are occasions, such, for instance, as the present one—or marriage—or hanging—which require a man to break through his lazy habits for once.”

“Ha! ha! Well put, Mr. Frampton. You might add to your exceptions, a jolly gallop on the trail of a fox, or an early appointment with a rustic beauty. But what can I do to pleasure you in this matter?”

“Nothing that I can see, unless it were to fix so early an hour that there would be no occasion to go to bed overnight. But that would probably suit nobody else, and I will sacrifice myself. Be pleased therefore, Mr. Brerewood, to name your own hour.”

“It is very magnanimous on your part, and I will accordingly trespass on your indulgence by suggesting six o’clock A.M., which will, I fear, be either too late or too early for your own particular convenience.”

“I have already waived that, and I readily accept six o'clock as the hour. Will you now do me the favour to fix the day?”

Brerewood paused a little. His wish was to name Saturday, so that nothing should interfere with his Friday's engagement, which a duel probably would, whether he were successful in it or not. On the other hand, as this was only Monday, he did not like to take the initiative in arranging for so lengthened a delay. He therefore fenced with the question, hoping that something might fall from Frampton which would afford an opening, without compromising himself, for fixing the later day.

“The day is to me,” said he, “a matter of pure indifference. I am quite willing to consult Mr. Allerton's wishes on that subject.”

Charley penetrated the manœuvre, and, although equally anxious that no earlier day than Saturday should be fixed, was too mindful of my injunctions to allow his leaning to be discernible.

“Mr. Allerton was so explicit in his instructions to me to offer no objections to any reasonable proposition of yours that I do not feel at liberty to interfere.”

“I had engaged to run down to Windsor to-morrow for a couple of days, and, as there is a lady in the case, nothing but a call so imperative as this of Mr. Allerton’s could have induced me to disappoint her; but of course”

“Oh, if there be a lady in the case,” interrupted Charley, “I am sure that Mr. Allerton is too gallant to permit any claim on you which he might have to deprive her of the entertainment which she would be certain to derive from your society. So we will pass over the next two or three days, if you like.”

“Thanks for your great courtesy, Mr. Frampton. The least I can do in return is to ask whether you have yourself any engagements for Friday?”

Charley bethought himself that the least he also could do was to meet Brerewood half way and to discard Friday, on his own responsibility, as the other had tabooed the other days. He accordingly answered,—

“To say the truth, Mr. Brerewood, Friday will be exceptionally inconvenient to me. I am bound to run down on Thursday night to Epsom, to trot a nag of mine against a mare of young Caversham’s—a three miles run, for 20*l.*;

owners to ride; to come off at nine o'clock, Friday morning. But of course I will give it up."

"Not at all," cried Brerewood, delighted; "I should be very sorry to spoil sport."

"Oh, I can but pay forfeit, and get up another match for another day."

"You shall do no such thing. We will, if you please, finally fix upon Saturday; and I hope that you will meet us that morning with 20*l.* of Caversham's money in your pocket."

"But really I must not stand in the way. When Allerton knows that the meeting has been put off a day, merely to suit my convenience, I do not know whether he will forgive me."

"Why tell him anything about it?"

"I think I must. It would not be just towards yourself, Mr. Brerewood, that he should think that you . . ."

"Ah, well, true! But I dare say that he will not be harder on you than I am."

"Perhaps not. But he might say that I have no right to compromise his honour for the sake of 20*l.*"

"But how the deuce is his honour (if even he did put it into the scales against money) to be

compromised, since he leaves me the choice of the day, and it is I who have named Saturday ? ”

“ Very true, Mr. Brerewood, I did not think of that. But I might call on Caversham, and ask him whether he would not mind putting the match off till next week. ”

“ Well, well, ” said Brerewood, rather impatiently, and evidently getting a little nettled, “ as you please, Mr. Frampton ; only be kind enough to make up your mind. ”

Frampton saw that he was going too far, and that by over-shooting the mark he might spoil all. He therefore readily replied, —

“ But, now I think of it, Caversham is a screw, as well as his mare, and the chance of winning the money without the trouble of winning the race would be sure to make him refuse my request. I will, therefore, at once avail myself of your indulgence and accept Saturday as the day, six o’clock A.M. as the hour, and Montagu Fields as the place. ”

“ All then is well understood, Mr. Frampton, and I am proud of having had the honour of making your acquaintance. ”

“ The honour, sir, is on my side ; ” and with smiling faces, and courteous bows, they parted.

That same evening Father Delany had been invited by Sir Wilfred Lannerdale, one of the chief leaders of the Catholic section of the Jacobite party, to confer with him at his residence in Duke Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, as to the attitude to be assumed at the meeting which was to take place on Friday.

The Lannerdales were an ancient Cheshire family, of moderate estate, whose pride it was that through good fortune and bad fortune, through persecutions inflicted to coerce and through temptations offered to pervert them, they had adhered staunchly to the old religion. Sir Wilfred was a sincere, upright, and honourable man, and was much trusted by his party. It was, however, to his virtues that he owed that distinction, and not to his talents. For though a fair speaker, of good presence and with a well-stored mind, he was essentially a vain and weak man. His vanity prompted him to think far too highly of his own opinions, while his weakness led him to act far too lightly on the opinions of others. He was a comely, dignified old gentleman, whose massive features and portly appearance outwardly betokened great vigour and resolution, and effectually

concealed from common observers the indecision and moral timidity which formed the basis of his character. His spiritual director was Father Delany, for whom he entertained the highest regard, and whose political views he devotedly shared.

As he was to be nominally the chief spokesman on the Catholic side at the forthcoming meeting, Sir Wilfred had asked Father Delany and another warm adherent, Mr. Ludwig Goldart, to attend that evening for the purpose of discussing and arranging the plan of operations.

Mr. Goldart was, in every way, a complete contrast to Sir Wilfred Lannerdale. He was a wealthy sugar-baker, carrying on business in some out-of-the-way place near the Tower,—Goodman's Fields, I think they call it,—and employing a great many workmen, chiefly German Catholics. His father had come over from Saxony with the traditional half-a-crown in his pocket, and by dint of hard work and economy had risen to affluence. His son inherited his industry and frugality, and had doubled his wealth. He was of diminutive stature, of unimpressive appearance, and his voice was low in its tone and hesitating in its utterance. But

beneath this unpromising exterior there lurked a soul of fire. Shrewd, bold, and energetic, Goldart was always in favour of vigorous action, and his decision of character had obtained for him a prominent position in the Catholic party.

The proceedings of this conclave were opened by Sir Wilfred.

“Gentlemen,” he said, “you are aware that Sir John Lester and some other gentlemen have invited us to meet them on Friday with a view of giving an open and public denial to certain statements which have recently obtained currency. These statements impute to the Protestant and Scotch party, who have for the moment obtained an ascendancy in the counsels of His Sacred Majesty James III. (God bless him), a design which is directly hostile to the interests of the holy Catholic religion and of those who profess it. Have I stated the case accurately?”

“You have, Sir Wilfred,” replied Father Delany; “but you have not detailed the nature of the design which, although we are acquainted with it, it might be well to define *totidem verbis*, so as to make sure that we have precisely the same thing in all our minds when we discuss it.”

“As the statement emanated,” rejoined Sir Wilfred, “from sources with which Mr. Goldart has some connexion, or at least acquaintance, perhaps he will be kind enough to make the exposition which Father Delany suggests.”

“Willingly,” said Goldart, in his soft tones and halting manner. “Some friends of mine,—I can quite rely on them,—are in correspondence with two different parties in Rome—quite unconnected with each other,—who write that Sir Alexander Macrae and others—who belong to the same clique—are very—if not all—powerful with the king, and have persuaded him, or are persuading him, to enter into an engagement, written and sealed, that he will, when he is restored, maintain Protestant ascendancy in the State, and not seek to remove Catholic disabilities, as now in force. In other words,” he continued, and, as was his wont, his voice became louder and his diction more fluent as he got through his introductory matter, and approached the climax, “we Catholics, the most loyal and faithful of his subjects, are to be subjected to continued persecution, and retained in fetters under a Catholic king!”

“Let us hope, then,” observed Father Delany, “that the statement is erroneous,—that the scheme it alludes to is a myth, and that the gentlemen we are to meet on Friday will be able to prove it to be so to our satisfaction.”

“I was just about expressing the same hope,” said Sir Wilfred.

“I prefer faith—that is, a certainty—to hope—that is, a wish,” said Goldart. “How are we to make sure—to feel secure—that the contradiction our Protestant friends are going to give to the rumour is itself authentic? What if the contradiction be false, and the report true?”

“What do you say to that, Father Delany?” asked Sir Wilfred, somewhat shaken.

“If Sir John Lester,” replied the priest, “and his friends, who are persons of honour, assure us of their own knowledge that the report is unfounded, and that nothing is in contemplation of the nature alluded to, I think that we must provisionally assume the truth of their assurances, until we shall have ascertained by surer methods how the case really stands.”

“Father Delany has,” observed Sir Wilfred, “forestalled the opinion which I was about to convey myself. How can you refuse to give

credit to the testimony of honourable gentlemen? We must believe them, and inquire afterwards."

"As a rule," observed Goldart, smiling sarcastically, "I prefer inquiring first and believing afterwards—always, however, excepting, of course, religious belief."

"Pray remember, my dear Mr. Goldart," said Father Delany, "that I did not advise that we should inwardly believe in the allegations that may be made by those gentlemen, but only that we should refrain from openly exhibiting our disbelief in them. My words were that we should provisionally assume the truth of their assurances."

"No doubt, reverend father," replied Goldart; "so ran your opinion, and I concur in that opinion—provided the assurances given to us are strong, explicit, and complete—that is provided that they be—their truth apart—satisfactory to all of us,—but otherwise not. If we cannot make ourselves quite sure, let us at least make ourselves as sure as we can."

"You fear, then," asked Sir Wilfred, "lest the declaration which those gentlemen intend making to us when we meet may not be of a

sufficiently definite character to quell our doubts and allay our apprehensions?"

"Till these—well, representatives of the heretical interest, explain themselves, I cannot say. But I may, with every deference, pronounce it as my opinion—of course, individually—that if there should be, perceptibly, any hesitation—or vagueness—or apparent mental reserve in the declaration they are about to make to us, or if it should prove to be loose or ambiguous, then we ought at once clearly to signify and loudly to proclaim to them that we, the Catholics of England and Ireland, will never submit to any such measure, or forgive its authors!" And, as usual with the speaker, the sentence, commencing in a gentle and broken manner, rose at the end into a sonorous and fluent strain.

In a conciliatory tone, Father Delany replied,—

"In our ignorance of the exact terms of the announcement which is to be made to us, it is difficult to chalk out beforehand the line we should adopt; nor is it easy to define the precise nature and extent of the assurances which we may deem sufficient to obviate the necessity

for our making so strong a protest as our friend has given expression to. It might be best, I fancy, to leave the conduct of the matter in the hands of Sir Wilfred, subject to such suggestions as may occur to each of us during the discussion."

"Subject to such suggestions, to be made openly and freely, I concur in the course recommended by Father Delany, as the best. But I beg leave to declare here, between ourselves, that I would sooner trample under foot my allegiance to the king,—our rightful and legitimate earthly monarch,—than be a party to the overthrow and degradation of that holy Church which Christ has established, of which the king is a member, Father Delany a pastor, and His Holiness, Pope Benedict, the head."

"Gallantly spoken, even if too warmly," observed Sir Wilfred. "By St. George! I remember the time when Father Delany moved in the very van of advanced Catholicism—quite a knight-errant in the cause, and of so untempered a zeal that our elders then deemed him indiscreet and hot-headed. And now it is our friend Goldart who, with impetuous ardour,

whips the horses forward to the front, and it is Father Delany who puts the brake on the wheel!"

"Not, I am sure," observed Goldart, "that he is less sincere,—only more politic."

"It is so," said Father Delany, "with all political parties. The restlessly active of one period, as they subside into normal exertion, are replaced by newer men, also of restless activity, and these in their turn are supplanted by a fresh set more restlessly active still. But all this works for the good of the party, which might sink into torpidity but for the infusion of fresh blood. The older members temper the audacity of the newer ones with prudence, and the younger members infuse fire and spirit into the phlegmatic counsels of the older men."

"Or, if I might," said Goldart, "be allowed to make the comparison without irreverence, the old paint on the wainscot does not fully reveal to the eye the dulness with which time hath dimmed it until it is shamed by contrast with the new coat by which it is replaced."

"Which new coat," rejoined the priest,

smiling, "will itself soon become dim in its turn. And now I have a deathbed to attend, and unless you require my further attendance, Sir Wilfred, I will take my leave."

And so the conference broke up.

CHAPTER XI.

BREREWOOD'S TWO FRIENDS.

WHILE the consultation in reference to the meeting to be held on Friday was taking place under the auspices of Sir Wilfred Lanmerdale, the same subject was being taken into consideration by Brerewood and two of his friends whom he had invited to his chamber nominally for that purpose. In reality, however, they were there to receive his orders. They were both members of the Jacobite party, busy and meddling, but insignificant,—like the straws on the surface of eddying waters which catch the eye, and indicate the course of the current, but exercise no influence over it.

One was Mr. Timothy Burford, M.A., a man who had left the University of Oxford with a

high reputation for classical attainments, and every prospect of a successful career, but whom a love at first of mere ease, then of pleasure, and finally of low dissipation, had so completely mastered that he was reduced to living, as it is termed, "by his wits." And a very poor living he made out of them. He was called "honest Tim Burford," by no means in reference to his integrity or high principle, but on account of the outspoken manner in which he railed at everything (except vice and immorality) and everybody (except those who happened at the time to be in his company). He was a Protestant, and so thoroughly a Protestant that he went to the length of protesting against all religions whatever. "Honest Tim" hated shams, and, as he himself believed in nothing but the pleasures of the senses, every other feeling he set down in the category of shams, and assailed accordingly.

He eked out a precarious livelihood by multifarious but intermittent labours; by writing (to order) either laudatory verses or lampoons (he himself preferred composing the latter), by introducing young fellows from the country to gaming-house keepers, by borrowing money,

and repaying it by any services that might be required in return (nor was he particular as to their nature, provided they were not menial; this was the relation in which he stood to Brerewood), by acting as touter to vintners and tavern-keepers, who allowed him a per-centage on the money spent in liquor by the company he introduced; and by many other shifts and devices about as "honest" and creditable.

Brerewood, who had found him a convenient political tool, despised and used him just as he himself (but this similitude did not occur to him) was used and despised by Frampton, and as Frampton also, with equal unconsciousness, was very probably despised and used by Henry Pelham. Who knows whether we might not look still further up, and add another link or two to this chain of reasoning? For George the Second was notorious for despising the ministers he used, while he himself was despised by nearly all those of his subjects who did not go the length of hating him. So much for "honest Tim Burford."

The third member of the triumvirate was Mr. Hugh Callaghan, a Dublin "boy." He

was a good-natured, wild, hearty, indiscreet, generous, rollicking, improvident fellow, whom everybody liked, but nobody trusted. He had not an enemy in the world, but then he had not a friend either. He was in immense request as a boon companion, and took his part in a drinking bout or a bacchanalian glee with great distinction, but his popularity procured him neither pelf nor preferment. He had a small estate in county Meath, which brought him in 250*l.* per annum, while the rent actually paid by the tenants on the property amounted to 800*l.* The difference was absorbed by the middle men; for the lessee who paid him the 250*l.* sub-divided the land, and let it for 550*l.*; while his sub-tenants cut it up into still smaller holdings, and again sub-let it for an aggregate of 800*l.* Thus the wretched farmers paid a great deal too much for the land, and the thoughtless owner got a great deal too little for it.

He eked out his insufficient income by borrowing from his friends, a process at which frequent practice had made him a perfect adept, and to which he resorted without the slightest scruple. For, free as air with his own

money, when he had any, he made equally free with the money of other people, if they would let him. Like most of the impecunious men who floated on the surface of the "town," he had once looked to literature as an unfailing mine of wealth, but, alas ! Fleetwood declined to bring out his tragedy, Jacob Tonson refused to publish his epic poem, and Cave would only grant admittance to his 'Moral Essays' into the pages of the *Gentleman's Magazine* on condition of their being gratuitous contributions.

Though a thoughtless trifler and a loose liver, Callaghan was a sincere and devout Roman Catholic, and he had enrolled himself in the ranks of the Jacobite body, not entirely because it was good fun to belong to a party which, to use his words, might some day "turn up trumps," but partly also out of zeal for the interests of his Church.

Brerewood received his companions with that kind of welcome which he knew would be most acceptable to them. The board sparkled with polished wine-glasses of various dimensions and fashions. Three cobwebbed bottles of Burgundy reclined on a wicker frame, sloping to an exact angle of $22\frac{1}{2}$ degrees. Two

large flasks of cut glass, glittering like diamonds, and labelled respectively "brandy" and "usquebaugh," occupied the centre, and were attended by a proper retinue of goblets and tumblers.

"Now, gentlemen," said Brerewood, "let us refresh ourselves first, and then we can proceed to business."

Nothing loth, they helped themselves freely to the good things provided for them, and rapidly put themselves into the required condition for attending to more important matters.

"To come to the point, Mr. Brerewood," said honest Tim Burford, after a time, "you no doubt have some object in wishing us to attend that meeting on Friday?"

"I have."

"All right! Say what it is you want, and be sure I shall want the same. '*Idem velle et idem nolle*' is old Sallust's definition of friendship. Would you like the meeting to go off tame or wild? Oil or vinegar, *Tros*, *Tyriusve*, all's one to me."

"The Catholic party will, I suppose, muster in strength?" observed Brerewood, interrogatively addressing himself to Callaghan.

“Faith, I suppose so,” answered the latter. “They have heard of some plot or other which you wicked heretics have been concocting against us somewhere; but I don’t know particulars. This is hardly the real wild, Donegal mountain usquebaugh. It lacks the oaty flavour. But it is very fine fwiskey, begotten out of barley and bere,—more refined, but less racy.”

“But we are going to remove that impression, and state, from good authority, that no such plot ever existed.”

“Are we to believe that or not?” asked Burford. “Whichever you please, you know. Just pass the wine.”

“I think,” replied Brerewood, “you had better believe it.”

“Now I see!” rejoined Burford, nodding sagaciously. “The Papals would not stand it, and the Prots. have to give it up; so now the dodge is to swear that such a scheme never entered into their innocent minds; to protest that not only the egg was not hatched, but that no egg was ever even laid. That is the cue, is it not?”

“Something like it,” said Brerewood. “It

is possible that the Protestant party might have been misled by the apparent apathy of the Catholics as to their religion, into conceiving that such a scheme would be acquiesced in."

"And now that they find that it won't do," burst in Callaghan, "they give it up! Thank ye for nothing."

"Well, you know," said Brerewood, "if the Catholics show themselves so absorbed in their devoted loyalty to the king, and so indifferent to mere religious considerations, no wonder that they should be misunderstood. Why do they not clearly say what they want and expect for themselves and their religion?"

"You are right, Brerewood," cried Callaghan; "we have been too reticent. Father Delany and the moderates have kept us too quiet, and what they call discretion has been taken for apathy."

"I fear that you are right," said Brerewood. "In this instance you have shown us your teeth, and what is the consequence?"

"Why, that our enemies show us their backs, and sneak off with an apology," replied

Callaghan, getting excited. "Apathetic about our holy religion? Devil a bit! as we'll show them."

"If the Catholics," added Brerewood, "are afraid to speak out for themselves, how can they expect—"

"Is it afraid to speak out, you say?" cried Callaghan, moved by spiritual fervour and spirituous drink. "Well, have it out, then! Down with the Protestant Church, and up with the Pope! That is speaking out, is it not?"

"A cheap display of enthusiasm!" sneered Burford; "you ejaculate that, my dear fellow, to philosophical ears which would not be shocked even if you shouted, 'Down with priestcraft, and up with the devil!'"

"For shame, you infidel reprobate!" rejoined Callaghan, "where do you expect to go, Tim, when you die?"

"To sleep!" replied the cynic.

"Aye, perchance to dream," retorted Callaghan, "as somebody says in the old play, and a bad dream for you it will be!"

Here Brerewood interposed, and speaking slowly and significantly, said,—

“I think, friend Callaghan, that, without putting it in the strong and pithy phrase which you just used, the Catholics ought, in order to remove the existing impression as to their indifference in regard to their religious creed, to make a clear and unmistakable announcement of their views, wishes, and expectations in case our combined efforts result in the restoration of the rightful king to the throne.”

“Faith!” said Callaghan, “and it is right you are, Mr. Brerewood.”

“And there never will be a more fitting opportunity than at the forthcoming meeting.”

“There will be too many Protestants there,” tauntingly interjected Burford. “The Romanists talk loud enough and big enough among themselves; but when it comes to speaking boldly before others, why, then they—” and he finished his sentence by an expressive shrug of the shoulders.

“They what, Tim Burford?” cried Callaghan, now thoroughly roused. “What! do you mean to insinuate that they are afraid? You heartless sceptic! you little know, you are not competent to understand, the holy zeal that fires the breast of an honest Catholic when his

religious fervour is once aroused. His faith burns with a bright, unquenchable flame that illumines his whole soul ; while what you Protestants call your belief is a mere phosphoric effulgence, emitting little light and no heat, and which, at the slightest touch of adversity, goes out in a—”

“ Yes, bad odour,” intercalated Burford, taking advantage of a slight hesitation on the part of Callaghan. “ Now we have set the furze-bushes on fire. Hearken to their roaring and crackling ! ”

“ We afraid, indeed ! Was it not our Church that furnished the noble army of martyrs whose blood cemented the great edifice of Christianity ? This taunt from you ! Why you confess your inferiority by admitting that we may be saved, while we know that you can’t ! ”

“ Well said, Infallibility ! ” sarcastically put in Burford ; “ now our dear friend’s bigotry is fairly ablaze. ‘ *Proximus ardet Ucalegon* ’ ” (pronouncing the last word as Hugh Callaghan).

“ I declare to you, solemnly,” continued Callaghan, taking no notice of the interruption, “ that I would place my right hand in a glow-

ing furnace to be charred to a cinder before I would belie my religion ! ”

“ Upon my word,” muttered Burford, sardonically, “ I believe he would ; he’s fool enough ! Mutius Scævola did so on smaller provocation ; but probably Falernian operated then as fwiskey, as he calls it, is operating now.”

“ Listen, friend Callaghan,” interposed Brerewood, who had now pretty well accomplished his purpose, “ no one intended, in the slightest degree, to impugn the sincerity of your convictions, or your courage in avowing them. The reference was to the leaders of your party who shrink from putting forward their claims, who seem to acquiesce in Protestant ascendancy, and who, by their submissiveness, court oppression. Show some spirit, men, and tell us at this next meeting what concessions you require.”

“ It shall be done, Mr. Brerewood,” returned Callaghan. “ If no other man is found to do it I will come forward myself and speak out. I know there are many among us—such as Goldart and others—who are chafing at the restraints imposed by the tacticians, as we call them.”

“If you want a thing,” added Brerewood, “you must not passively wait till it is offered to you. To win your way you must push your way.”

“To be sure,” chimed in Burford. “If you wish not to be bullied you must bully others.”

“Well, well,” said Callaghan, somewhat impatiently, “say no more; my mind is made up.”

“If Hugh is to make a speech at the meeting, I advise your presenting him with a flask of this usquebaugh to be freely used just before as a fount of inspiration. See how eloquent it has made him to-night.”

“I’ll tell you what, Tim Burford,” said the Irishman, turning upon him, and suddenly calling to mind the gibes and sneers of which he had taken no notice before, “you’re a cur!—a yelping cur!”

“Cur!” replied Burford, ‘*Cur? quamobrem?*’ Why cur? *Quare?*”

“There is no quarry at all about it,” rejoined Callaghan, “I’ll tell you what a cur does. When a man is going on his way quietly, thinking of other things, the cantankerous brute follows him snarling and snapping at his

heels, but when the man turns round at him with uplifted stick the beast curls down his lean tail between his ignoble legs and runs away howling. *De te fabula narratur.*"

"That merely means that, while I am fond of indulging in a few innocent and sportive barks, I am neither so savage as to bite, nor so silly as to stay to be beaten. Why, my dear fellow, it is a compliment at once to my benevolence and my wisdom."

"Come, friends," interposed Brerewood, "let us declare a truce. You each of you have said some smart things. It has been very pretty fencing, but do not take the buttons off your foils. Fill your glasses, and let us drink 'Success to the good cause.'"

The conversation then strayed on to indifferent topics, and the company soon after separated.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MEETING AT DAME HORREBOW'S CHAPEL.

TURNAGAIN ALLEY is a small court branching out from the west side of Fetter Lane, consisting of only about half-a-dozen houses. As its name implies, it is what the French call an *impasse*. There is no thoroughfare through it, and those who go in must "turn again," and go out under the same arched passage through which they entered.

The few houses that occupied the sides of the alley were of fair size, but old and dilapidated. From between the bricks of which they were built the mortar seemed to be gradually disappearing, as if it was raked out. The windows looked as if they never opened, and couldn't. The old unrenewed paint on the wood-work rose everywhere in blisters, and

some of it was curled up into shavings, exhibiting the grain of the wood diversified by occasional cracks. The one stone step to each front door was hollowed and worn away by the combined influence of continual wear and frequent knife-sharpening. Open doors revealed dark, narrow passages, with sanded floors and lath and plaster walls, occasional patches in which exhibited all lath and no plaster. These frail buildings were tenanted by numerous poor families, consisting apparently of children alone, for these abounded and ordinarily no other creature was visible.

The tenement, however, which occupied the end of the alley, and faced the entrance from Fetter Lane, was a building of greater pretensions. It was larger and loftier than its neighbours, and was kept in better repair. It belonged from of old to the Horrebow family, of which the sole living representative was an old lady of seventy, generally known as Dame Horrebow. She was a sincere and pious Catholic, who devoted all her income, beyond what her own modest necessities required, to works of kindness and benevolence. Nor did she confine her sympathies to her co-religionists.

Distinctions of faith made with her no distinctions of charity, and she was accordingly respected and beloved by all.

The two large rooms on the first floor of her house she had fitted up as a place of worship, and it had been consecrated as a Roman Catholic chapel, to which all persons were admitted free, and of which she bore all the expenses out of her private means. The chaplain was old Father Morrell, to whose use she gave up the two rooms on the ground floor under the chapel. In the upper part of the house she resided herself with an old servant, in the most frugal and inexpensive manner. Projecting from the first floor, there was thrown out a large bay-window, which formed a good addition to the size of the front room devoted to the chapel; and, the wall separating it from the back room being pierced through nearly to its full extent, the total area available for the use of the congregation was sufficient to accommodate about one hundred and fifty persons.

The altar was raised in the larger of the two rooms, and was cut off from the congregation by a low wooden railing. There were no pews, only wooden benches and chairs, nor

any pulpit, and the priest delivered his sermon standing with his back leaning against the altar. If the arrangements were primitive, so indeed were the devotion and fervour of the little congregation. All its members were actuated by the same feeling—that of deep conviction, and if Father Morrell's little flock rarely received any addition to its numbers, on the other hand none of the sheep ever strayed away from the fold.

This was the chapel which Dame Horrebow had, at the request of Father Delany, who had great influence over her, and against the good will of Father Morrell, who was a man of peace and distrusted political agitators, lent for the purposes of the meeting to which we have referred.

As the hour approached for which it was convened small groups of men of a class not often seen in that humble neighbourhood gradually assembled in the little alley in front of the chapel. The door was not yet open; but soon Sir Wilfred Lannerdale, Father Delany, and other members of the managing committee made their appearance, and to them admittance was given by Cassidy, the

doorkeeper. Cassidy was a stalwart Irishman, in the prime of life, whose nominal office was that of sacristan, but who, in reality, was man of all work to Father Morrell. Beside his multifarious duties as sacristan or vestry-keeper, he acted as acolyte or censer-bearer, beadle, or body-servant, as he might be wanted. He served mass, swung the censer, swept the chapel, kept the vestments in order, cleaned and arranged the seats, opened the doors, waited on the priest, &c., and was not only indefatigable, but performed all this work with ready zeal and undeviating good humour. Nothing ever put him out. When harassed by several people calling on him to do several things all at once, he would turn round, look at them smiling quietly, scratch his head, and say, "Jist so!" then steadily and coolly set about that thing that appeared to him to deserve priority.

The committee proceeded to make the few simple arrangements that the occasion required. They found that Father Morrell had boarded off the precincts of the altar, so as to preserve it from intrusion and desecration. Against this boarding they contrived a small platform,

by means of a few benches placed side by side, on which a chair was placed for Sir W. Lan-
nerdale, who, though not formally appointed
chairman, was tacitly understood to represent
the Catholic party. That part of the chapel
which had formerly been the back room was
set aside for the reception of the Protestant
portion of the meeting, which would thus form
a separate and compact group.

At a quarter before eight, it being still quite
light on that long summer's day, the door was
opened, and the people streamed in. Cassidy
took care that no one should pass without pro-
ducing a ticket, unless he was personally in-
troduced by a well-known member. On the
top of the stairs, just between the two doors
that opened respectively one into the front, the
other into the back room, stood Father Delany,
who had undertaken the duty of ushering the
Catholics into the former and the Protestants
into the latter.

I and Lopps, Zillah and Philip, came up-
stairs together. Zillah introduced me to Father
Delany, who, after a few brief words of wel-
come, requested our party (although two of
them were Protestants) to go into the Catholic

room, and take our stand as near the platform as possible, as he himself would occupy the same position, and, therefore, would be near us. We placed ourselves on that side of the platform which was most distant from the back room, in order to diminish the chances of a premature recognition of us by Brerewood.

Not long afterwards, Sir John Lester, Captain Letheby, and other of the most prominent of the Protestant committee, took their seats in the back room. Brerewood did not accompany them, but entered a minute or two afterwards, with a short, middle-aged gentleman, to whom he appeared to show much attention. The face immediately struck me as a familiar one, but it was not till I looked and thought again and again that it flashed upon me that it was my aunt. Could it be possible? What! My aunt in male attire! My aunt at a political meeting in company with Brerewood! What could it all mean? It could not be mere curiosity that had brought her there. No doubt it had been contrived for some deep purpose of his own by that wily, dangerous man! But, if so, it would recoil against himself, and my aunt's presence, instead of enhancing his triumph,

if such were his object, would probably consummate his defeat.

At a few minutes past eight Sir Wilfred Lannerdale rose from his chair and opened the business of the evening. By this time the two rooms were tolerably well filled: probably about eighty persons were present, of whom, however, nearly three-fourths were in the large front room, and were, consequently, Catholics. The Protestants consisted chiefly of the deputation which Sir John Lester headed, and the back room was by no means crowded.

“Gentlemen,” said Sir Wilfred, with his usual pompous elocution, “efficient precautions have been taken to ensure that none but faithful friends and devoted adherents to the good cause which we all have at heart should obtain admittance to this assembly. We may, therefore, open our minds freely to each other, and deliberate thoughtfully and dispassionately on the topics which form the especial object of this meeting. Sir John Lester, who is accompanied by Mr. Brerewood and other colleagues on the same committee, has kindly offered to address us on a subject of deep importance to us all, and in calling upon him to make his pro-

posed statement, I have at the same time to beg that you will listen to it with due deference and respectful attention."

This introductory speech was received with applause, and when Sir John Lester got upon a chair to address the meeting he was greeted with loud cries of "Hear him! Hear him!" He was a man of considerable ability, of moderate views, and he was sincerely desirous of healing the breach which religious jealousies threatened to introduce into the Jacobite party. In well-chosen language, winning tones, and a conciliatory manner, he referred to the false rumour which had excited the suspicions and resentment of his Catholic friends. He denied in the most positive terms that there was the slightest foundation for it. It was a pure invention of their common enemy, concocted with a view to sow dissension in their ranks. He held in his hand a letter, dated Rome, from Sir Alexander Macrae (whom he eulogized as one of the ablest and most energetic of His Sacred Majesty's advisers), in which the writer protested, in the most emphatic language, that not only had no such compact, inimical to the Catholic religion and injurious to his Catholic

subjects, been entered into by His Majesty James III., not only had no such scheme been proposed or even mooted to him, but no project bearing the slightest resemblance to it had ever entered into the minds of His Majesty's Protestant advisers; and after reading that letter aloud, with running comments of his own, he concluded by declaring that any such attempt to dictate terms and conditions to our rightful monarch would be illegal, unconstitutional, and disloyal, and that he himself would condemn it as loudly, and resist it as vigorously, as any of his Catholic fellow-subjects whom he had now the honour of addressing.

This honest speech made a strong impression on the hearers, and elicited loud cheers from both parties. It looked at that moment as though the machinations of Brerewood and his satellites would prove abortive, and the advocates for union and concord would carry the day.

But all was not over yet. Sir Wilfred Landerdale was collecting the suffrages of those around him, so as, accordingly, to shape the reply he was preparing to make on behalf of the Catholic party; but there were so many shades of difference between the unqualified

assent of the moderates and the qualified dissent of the more violent, that he was fairly puzzled, and, as is the custom with trimmers, he ended by ingeniously shirking the question. Speak, however, he must without further delay. He therefore said in a resolute tone and a spirited manner, which effectually concealed his wavering and timidity,—

“Sir John Lester, in the name of this assemblage I beg to tender you our sincere acknowledgments both for the information that you have imparted to us, and for the creditable sentiments embodied in the peroration of your excellent speech. As to its effect in completely removing from our minds the impressions they had previously received, I have myself arrived at a very decided and definite opinion. What that opinion is, however, I regret that I must refrain from disclosing at present, because being the mere delegate of my friends here assembled, it is my duty to give expression to their opinions and not to my own. Let them therefore freely give utterance to their views, and perhaps my reverend friend, Father Delany, will set the example by giving us the benefit of his thoughts on the subject.”

Thus appealed to, Father Delany came forward, though very reluctantly, to address the audience. He was averse to disturbing the harmonious feeling that now pervaded the meeting; he dreaded the interference of the zealots of the party, and he had hoped that Lannerdale would have taken on himself the responsibility of expressing in general terms the satisfaction of the meeting at the ample disclaimer pronounced by Sir John Lester, and thus ended the matter. Such satisfaction he might have given an implied assent to, if announced by another, but he could not conscientiously announce it himself. He entertained a strong suspicion that, though it might be true that no such project had been formally mooted, yet some measure of the kind might have been devised among a powerful Protestant clique, who had purposely set the rumour afloat as a feeler. If the Catholics took it quietly, then it might be adopted; if not, it might be disowned. With this impression strong on his mind, on the one hand, and with the earnest desire to maintain concord, on the other, he had a difficult course to steer.

“Gentlemen,” he said, “Sir John Lester has

spoken on his own behalf, on behalf of all the party who act with him here, and on behalf of Sir Alexander Macrae, who represents a large portion of the immediate environment of His sacred Majesty at Rome. For these he can vouch, and has vouched in straightforward, manly, and highly satisfactory terms. And we owe him and his colleagues a cordial vote of thanks for a declaration which so effectually clears from suspicion all those who come within its range."

"If I may be allowed," said a feeble, hesitating voice from an extreme corner of the room,—“if I may be allowed to say a few words, I would ask a question. Who is here?—Is any here—to vouch for those,” and here the voice became stronger and more fluent, “who are not included in Sir John Lester’s declaration?”

It was Goldart who spoke. He had not taken his place near the platform along with the other leading men: his stand was with the outsiders—the casual visitors near the door. It was part of his system. To be humble yet powerful, retiring yet prominent, diffident in manner but audacious in speech,—those were the contrasts in which his vanity delighted.

He was one of the people, and he boasted of it; indeed he liked to flaunt his low origin in the faces of his aristocratic friends. With greater pride he trampled on the pride of the well born. In their class they were mediocrities; in his he occupied a distinguished position. His wealth and talent sufficed for the latter, but not for eminence in the former, unless accompanied by birth and rank. Better to reign among the small than be a nonentity among the great.

Goldart's question gave the key-note to the discontented section of the meeting. It remained for some little time without an answer. At last Sir John Lester, who had in vain looked to Lannerdale to reply, said,—

“I beg to remind you that Sir Alexander Macrae's denegation was not confined to his immediate circle of friends, but included the whole of His Majesty's present advisers. Personally I cannot of course vouch for unknown and unofficial individuals, but I do not believe that the notion which we all of us censure can have been entertained by any but the imprudent and fanatical.”

“I fear,” cried “honest” Tim Burford, who was watching an opportunity to promote Brere-

wood's views, "that if Sir John Lester can only pledge himself for the wise and virtuous he has pledged himself for a small minority. It is precisely against the 'imprudent and fanatical' that we seek to be protected."

This casuistical turn to the question elicited applause from many, in the midst of which Hugh Callaghan jumped on a chair, and with the fluent oratory with which, in common with many of his countrymen, he was gifted, delivered himself as follows,—

"Fellow-Catholics! You are meek, and are therefore scorned; you are trustful, and are therefore deceived; you are patient, and are therefore persecuted. Assume a more manly attitude. Boldly proclaim your aspirations and aims; boldly display your determination and your strength; and, instead of dark intrigues, tending to rivet your chains, you will win co-operation to free you from them. We are working for the restoration of the Stuarts, not only because they are our legitimate kings, but also because they are Catholic kings; and through them we want, and we expect to secure, equality of political rights with our Protestant brethren and the abrogation of all Church

supremacy in these realms. Will Sir John Lester and his friends assist us in the accomplishment of these objects?"

The apple of discord was now fairly thrown in the midst of the assemblage. The people grew excited. Contending waves of opposite feelings surged through the mass.

"Yes, yes!" "No, no!" "Hear him!" "Well put!" "Indiscreet!" "Cloven foot!" "Plain, anyhow!" were the mingled exclamations that resounded from different parts of the room.

Sir Wilfred was bewildered; he scratched his wig, he wiped his forehead, he blew his nose, he tried to catch the divergent suggestions which a dozen of his friends launched at him at once, but in vain. He was quite at a loss what to do—whether to support the querist, which course would place him in conflict with the moderate party, or to suppress as irrelevant all discussion on a question never contemplated by the promoters of the meeting, which course would bring down upon him the attacks of the extreme section.

Meanwhile Brerewood was delighted with the turn things were taking.

“Do you now see,” he whispered to Mrs. Up-
penham, who stood near him, “the real aim of
the Catholic party? Nothing will content them
short of making their Church the State Church
instead of ours.”

At length Sir John Lester arose, and the
wave of his hand, which indicated his intention
of addressing the meeting, stilled the uproar,
and his words were listened to in silence,—

“Gentlemen,” he said, “we have met here
for the special purpose of joining together in
protesting against a rumoured design of com-
mitting His Majesty to a certain future course.
We all agree that it is very wrong to do so.
Let us then be consistent, and decline pre-
scribing to him any future policy, whether it be
in favour of one party or of the other. Let us
leave his hands untrammelled and free to work
good to our country, under God’s holy inspira-
tions, and may his reign prove long and pros-
perous!”

These few words spread oil over the troubled
waters. Vague and evasive as they were, yet,
being uttered with a frank and genial cor-
diality, they captivated the multitude, who
testified their approval by loud applause.

Before it subsided Goldart had, at his own request, been mounted on a wooden form, and buttressed there (for it was narrow and rickety) by a sedan-bearer and a small-coal man who stood near him, he thus addressed the meeting,—

“The question asked, if I am not very much mistaken, was not whether His Majesty was to be pledged to abolish both Catholic disabilities and Protestant Church supremacy, but whether Sir John Lester and his friends would join in abolishing them. They were not expected to speak for His Majesty, but surely they could speak for themselves.”

This attempt to reopen the question was not received very warmly by the great body of the assembly; and if Sir Wilfred Lannerdale had only interposed (as Father Delany earnestly urged him) and stated that the question now introduced was foreign to the scope and object of the meeting, and could not therefore be discussed, the matter would have been dropped, and all would have ended in peace.

Concord did not suit Brerewood; and while Sir Wilfred was wavering and trying to make up his mind, the former obtained permission

from Sir John Lester to reply to the last speaker, which he did in the following terms:—

“ My honourable friend, Sir John Lester, has so ably and lucidly expounded the views of those who act with him, that I should have abstained from all remark, were it not from a fear lest total silence on our part, in reference to the question put by the last speaker, might be misconstrued.”

So far his words, tone, and demeanour were courteous and conciliatory; but as his object was to excite the passions of the Catholic part of the assemblage, so as to lure them into a display of religious zealotry, he gradually became bitter and defiant.

“ It is said,” he continued, “ that silence gives consent; but it is only fair and candid to state that, in this case at least, our silence must not be so interpreted. We came here to tell you that no plot existed to pledge his gracious Majesty (whom God preserve!) to maintain Catholic disabilities and the supremacy of the Protestant Church; but we did not come here to pledge ourselves to abrogate them.” (A few hisses from the “thorough” party.) “ If you are attached to your religion,” he continued,

addressing that part of the room whence the sounds of disapproval had proceeded, "do not be surprised if we are attached to ours!"

"Yours is not a religion," shouted out Hugh Callaghan.

"Not a religion! Then what is it?"

"A heresy!" returned the same voice, at which hit there was some laughter.

"A heresy?" resumed Brerewood. "Aye! to call names is the bigot's substitute for argument. However, I am not here to engage in theological discussions, but to state a political truth. Protestant England will submit to a Catholic king, but not to Catholic ascendancy." (Loud murmurs and hisses.) "We will restore His Sacred Majesty, not because, but although he is a Catholic."

Here the uproar became general, and the speaker had to pause.

"Pray sit down, Mr. Brerewood," said Sir John Lester, "do not go on; you have done mischief enough already."

But Brerewood would not listen to him. As soon as there was a sufficient lull to give him a chance of being heard, he went on in an excited manner,—

“The fact is that your aim is not only to remove political disabilities from the Catholics, but to transfer them to the Protestants; not only to destroy the legal supremacy of the Protestant Church, but to substitute for it the illegal domination of the Pope of Rome!”

At this violent outburst, groans, hisses, and confused exclamations mingled into a hideous and discordant chorus. Those peaceful walls which for so many years past had re-echoed no other tones but those of fervent prayers, pious hymns, and religious exhortations, now resounded with the harsh din of strife and contention. Many jumped on their seats, and fiercely shook their fists at Brerewood. Even his Protestant companions signified their disapproval of his uncalled-for vehemence by silence and averted looks. He, meanwhile, remained unmoved. With folded arms and scornful face, he stood in an attitude of defiance, and the disdain he exhibited seemed extended both to the foes who threatened to assail and to the friends who declined to support him.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE STRUGGLE.

WHEN the turbulence of the meeting had somewhat exhausted itself, Father Delany stood forward to speak. All parties showed a disposition to listen to a man so well known for the staunchness of his principles and, at the same time, for his mild and conciliatory disposition.

“Friends,” said he, impressively, “and in that word I include the occupants of both these rooms, let us pass over in silence the intemperate language and the idle taunts of the last speaker. The momentary wrath they excite in us is quickly succeeded by lasting contempt. We know that it is Sir John Lester, and not Mr. Brerewood, who represents the gentlemen whom we were invited to meet” (“Hear, hear,” from most of the parties alluded to); “and to

the scandalous imputations of that man I attach all the less importance from the circumstance that is about to be made known to the meeting. All of you, I pray, attend to this, for all are interested in it. Philip Centry, stand forth ! ”

The recent excitement in great measure gave way to a feeling of curiosity, and all eyes were turned towards the person to whom Father Delany relinquished his place in the front of the small platform. They saw a man of low stature, with a humped back, broad, square shoulders, between which his head was deeply set, but presenting a face indicative of such power that it went far to redeem his other shortcomings.

Philip Centry fixed his dark, fiery eyes on Brerewood, and, pointing at him with extended arm and forefinger, cried, in a voice of thunder, of which the deep bass yet loudly resonant tones might have been heard outside the building,—

“ Martin Brerewood, I publicly arraign you as a foul traitor to the Stuart cause ! You are, and have long been, a spy and an emissary of the Hanoverian Government, and you are in

constant communication with Mr. Frampton of the Secret Service Office ! ”

Dead silence succeeded these words ; the meeting was startled and bewildered by this abrupt and sweeping denunciation. All eyes were turned on Brerewood. He was utterly taken by surprise, and his presence of mind temporarily forsook him. He turned deadly pale ; he quailed beneath the gaze of so many eyes, and looked wildly from one part of the room to the other, as though (and many so interpreted it) he were planning his escape. This, and his silence for nearly a minute, which was caused by the flood of thoughts that rushed across his mind, produced an impression unfavourable to him. The suddenness of the blow had staggered him, and he required a brief respite to collect his ideas. It was clear to him that such an accusation could never have been so boldly and publicly made, were there not proofs forthcoming to support it. What were those proofs ? Were they so slight that his simple denial would outweigh them ? Or were they so cogent that such denial would only entail the additional ignominy of uttering a useless lie ? Should he gain

time, and try to recover his position ; or should he set them all at defiance, and affect to disdain replying to such an imputation? All these considerations flashed like lightning through his brain during the brief space of that minute's silence. It seemed only an instant to him, but it seemed like many minutes to the assembly, to whom each second's delay in answering the charge looked like a step towards the admission of guilt.

Brerewood saw that time pressed, and that his hesitation was telling against him. He made an effort, and was on the point of speaking, when Sir John Lester, in order to break the awkwardness of the pause, and to give Brerewood time to recover himself, addressed the meeting.

“Gentlemen,” he said, “a serious accusation—most serious since it involves honour—has been brought by an unknown person against a gentleman whom we have long known, esteemed, and respected. Mr. Brerewood is no doubt preparing a satisfactory reply to it, but meanwhile it is only due to ourselves to inquire what are the proofs on which this strange indictment rests.”

From some came cries of assent, such as, "Yes," "Certainly"; but many shook their heads and were silent. This challenge for proof was answered by Father Delany,—

"We have been waiting for some time to hear what Mr. Brerewood has to say. Meanwhile, in reply to the very proper and natural inquiry made by Sir John Lester, I may inform him that the party who has preferred the charge has two witnesses present, besides other evidence, to corroborate and support that charge. Shall I bring them forward for examination?"

By this time Brerewood had recovered his self-possession, and formed his plan.

"Forgive me, gentlemen," he cried, "if I have for a moment been struck dumb by surprise and indignation at the foul and calumnious charge launched at me, in loud and bullying tones, by a deformed, beetle-browed ruffian whom I never before saw in my life. Let his witnesses come forward and make their allegations; but not at a distance, to be prompted by their instigators, and to escape the vigilant eye of their judges. Let them come here—close here. Let them confront me. Let us see

who they are. Let them come into the full glare of day, not lurk in obscurity to stab in the dark."

He thereupon went and seated himself on the low ledge, about two feet high, which formed the boundary between the front and back rooms, and which was left standing when an opening had been made between the two, many years before. This course seemed to meet with the approval of the meeting, partly as being only fair, and partly because it enabled them to obtain a clearer view of the parties who were the principal actors in this unexpected and interesting scene, which now absorbed all their attention. Meanwhile, poor Sir Wilfred Lannerdale was in a sad way.

"What is the meaning of all this?" he asked of Father Delany. "What are we to do? What course am I to take? What am I to say? Who are these people?" and he scratched his wig and wiped his brow in a state of most despondent irresolution.

Father Delany had no time to answer his questions, and, as Brerewood's demand for his accusers to be confronted with him could not be eluded, he told Philip, Zillah, and Lopps to

follow him, and proceeded with them to that part of the room that adjoined the low partition on which Brerewood was seated. He then bowed to Sir John Lester, who stood near, and said,—

“This, sir, is Mr. Philip Centry, the accuser; these are Mr. Dillon and P. Lopps, the witnesses.”

I had only followed at a certain distance, as Father Delany thought it inexpedient that I should for the present be recognized by Brerewood as mixed up in the affair.

“And what is it,” asked Sir John, “that these witnesses are prepared to depose to?”

“As I understand it,” replied Father Delany, “they will testify that they have seen Mr. Brerewood, familiarly and with little disguise, enter the office of Mr. Frampton at the Secret Service Office, and remain there a considerable time.”

“Certainly,” said Sir John, smiling, “Mr. Frampton is a very suspicious connexion for a Jacobite emissary to form; but, of course, that may be explained away.”

While this was passing, Brerewood had been closely scanning the countenances of his three

foes. Two of them were quite unknown to him, but Mr. Dillon's face he was sure he had seen before. He searched and scoured his memory actively, and at last, with the extra acumen inspired by a sense of danger and the importance of the crisis, he penetrated through Dillon's disguise and recognized the Countess Molina.

"Aha!" thought he, "she is at the bottom of this conspiracy! I ought to have known from the dramatic form it has taken that a woman or a priest or both must be in it. I must beware, however; they are keen adversaries! Woe be to her even if she succeeds! She shall feel the heavy weight of my hand in revenge."

He, for the present, carefully suppressed all sign of having recognized her, and turned to listen to the dialogue between Father Delany and Sir John Lester. Finding from its purport that he had been detected entering the Secret Service Office, he at once determined on his course. He would admit the fact and explain it away. But first it would be necessary to know the precise extent and nature of the evidence that was to be brought against him.

For that purpose he asked for Sir John's permission to interrogate the witnesses, which was willingly accorded, and in pursuance of that course Sir John said, addressing himself to the meeting,—

“Gentlemen, Mr. Brerewood is about to ask some questions of the witnesses. Kindly give this interrogatory your attention.”

To this request the meeting, eager to gratify its curiosity, readily acceded, and was hushed into watchful silence.

Brerewood addressed Zillah, in a clear and audible voice.

“Your name, you say, is Dillon?”

“It is.”

“You say that you have seen me enter the doors of the Secret Service Office?”

“Yes.”

It was in his thoughts to ask how often, but he feared that the answer might be “many times,” which would tell against him. He therefore preferred not mootng that question.

“And what else have you to depose in regard to this matter?”

“Nothing!” replied Zillah, who had her cue from Father Delany.

Brerewood breathed again. If that was all, he would secure an easy triumph.

“If that is all, it is not much, is it?” asked he, exultingly.

“Yes, I think it is,” replied Dillon, emphatically.

“That is for others to decide,” said he, and, irritated at the hostility which that answer displayed, he resolved to have his revenge by exposing his enemy. He fixed a keen glance on the witness, and asked,—

“You say that you are Mr. Dillon from Jersey. Now, speak the truth; are you really what you profess to be?”

The glance from Brerewood that preceded the question had encountered that of Zillah, directed at the same instant towards him. Their eyes had met, and in his she had read, as clearly as if he had said it, that he had recognized her notwithstanding her disguise.

With her usual quickness she framed a system of tactics to suit this new conjuncture. She would not be entrapped into a firm adherence to her fictitious name and station, and thus give Brerewood the luxury of exposing her imposture. No; she would take the wind

out of his sails, and throw off her disguise spontaneously, sooner than be forcibly stripped of it. By the time that Brerewood had enunciated the question set forth above she was prepared with her answer.

"No, I am not," said she; "neither you nor I, Mr. Brerewood, are what we profess to be."

"Oh, then," rejoined Brerewood, with a sneer, "you are neither Mr. Dillon, nor are you from Jersey. Perhaps you may not even belong to the sex whose dress you wear! Are you a man or a woman?"

"A woman," unhesitatingly replied she.

At this answer the curiosity of the spectators redoubled. Those at the back made a rush to get nearer, and necks were craned to obtain a view of this mysterious witness. Brerewood was disconcerted. He had expected that she would have told a series of untruths to preserve her *incognito*, and that he would have had the triumph of exposing them. He did not feel disposed to pursue an examination which was not yielding the results which he had looked for. But he saw that matters could not rest where they were. He must

perforce go on. As he framed the next question he entertained some hope that the witness would, from several combined motives, conceal her real name, and thus lay herself open to his attacks. He accordingly asked,—

“Since you have thrown off your false pretences, and have renounced your name, your country, and your sex, perhaps you will tell us who you really are?”

“I am, and you know that I am, the Countess Molina.”

I was not the only one whom this announcement took by surprise. When I had first met Dillon I felt convinced that I had seen that face before, and now that the mystery was solved I wondered at my stupidity at not having recognized in him the woman who had audaciously claimed to be my mother.

Three or four of the audience who had known her personally recognized her, and from different parts of the room came various exclamations, such as,

“So it is!”

“Yes, that is she!”

“A good friend to the cause she is too!”

“There is some mystery here!” &c.

Sir John Lester had once, several months before, been introduced to the countess by one of his friends, and although he had, of course, not known her again in her present dress, yet he had sufficient recollection of her features to recognize her now that she had announced herself.

“Madam,” he said, “I do not inquire why it is that you present yourself here thus disguised, for, in our present unhappy times, such concealment may be rendered necessary by political exigencies; but allow me to ask you one question. Was it by chance that you saw, or by design that you watched, Mr. Brerewood’s visits to Mr. Frampton’s office?”

“I watched him designedly.”

Here Brerewood, who did not like the course this examination was taking, interposed, saying,—

“As there is nothing else to be elicited from the witnesses, I am now prepared to give the meeting such explanations as shall be fully satisfactory to them.”

“Excuse me, Mr. Brerewood,” said Sir John Lester, with a certain degree of coldness, which intimated that he attached much more import-

ance to the evidence of Countess Molina than he had to that of an unknown individual such as Mr. Dillon, and which made Brerewood bitterly repent that he had himself increased his difficulties by unveiling her *incognito*,—"excuse me, but before you enter on your explanation you must allow me, if you please, to put another question or two to the countess."

Brerewood bowed courteously, but with rage in his heart.

"Madam," continued Sir John, "if you watched Mr. Brerewood designedly, you must have entertained some suspicions. May I inquire on what they were founded?"

"On a warning conveyed in a letter from a political friend at Paris."

"Is it indiscreet to ask you what was its tenor?"

"Not at all. I have the letter with me, and I will show it you."

She had prepared herself for every contingency, and had brought with her the letter J. B. Q., from which she had given Brerewood a garbled extract. She handed it to Sir John Lester, saying,—

"I have underlined in pencil the passage

which specially refers to Mr. Brerewood, and I think it would be right to read it aloud to the meeting."

The meeting was delighted. It was like being admitted to a cabinet council, or assisting at the reading of a secret dispatch. The plot, interesting as it had already proved, was thickening, and one of the clues to the mystery was about to be entrusted into their hands. While few could bring themselves to believe in Brerewood's guilt, all were anxious to know everything that could be possibly adduced against him, as it would serve to enhance either the enormity of his crime or the merits of his defence. It was a species of State trial, on which they sat as a jury; and it was due to them, they thought, that not a tittle of the evidence that could be produced on either side should be suppressed.

Sir John Lester read the entire letter to himself, and then, with a perceptible elevation of the eyebrows, he said,—

"Gentlemen, this is a letter from a certain J. Tranton, addressed to the Countess Molina, which treats generally on political matters connected with our cause, and contains the following

passage :—‘ Be cautious with B——d. Watch and ascertain whether he has relations with F——n, of the Secret Service Office. Macrae has misgivings.’ That B dash d means Brerewood is pretty evident, because that name is referred to incidentally in another part of the letter, and written in full. That F dash n means Frampton is beyond a doubt.”

Great excitement among the jury. Various opinions are emitted.

Cries of “That proves nothing!” mingled with cries of “Very suspicious!” “What will he say to that?” &c.

Meanwhile Brerewood exclaimed to himself, wrathfully,—

“That wicked she-devil! She suppressed to me the part that referred to my suspected relations with Frampton, and thus misled me! Otherwise I should have taken other measures, and not fallen into this trap. The infamous wretch! This foul, low-bred adventuress to bring me to this! Martin, if you do not wreak upon her full, full, full vengeance for this, you are not fit to live. She and Macrae! Two savage hatreds to glut. But she first. Let me at least live for that.”

He was recalled from his dream of hate and revenge by Sir John Lester's saying to him,—

“Now, Mr. Brerewood, we are ready to hear you, and I fervently hope you will be able thoroughly to erase all impressions adverse to you.”

“Thanks !” said Brerewood, aside to Sir John. “Pray get me a glass of water, and contrive two minutes' delay while I drink it.”

Thereupon Sir John, whose kind heart sympathized with the critical position in which Brerewood was placed, spoke thus to the meeting,—

“Friends! We are, by peculiar and unexpected circumstances, called upon to adjudicate on a matter of singular delicacy, which affects a man whom we have always honoured as a faithful, devoted, and intelligent ally in the good cause. Your verdict will either clear his character, which will then stand out in brighter colours than ever, or will inflict upon him such a stain as will mark his life with infamy for evermore. Then, friends, be cool, and impartial! Who prejudges, in most cases misjudges. And I pray to the heavenly Father of us all that He may this day make the truth prevail !”

“Amen !” loudly responded Father Delany, although it was to the prayer of a heretic ; and all, impressed by Sir John’s solemn and fervent appeal, Catholics and Protestants, reverently re-echoed “Amen !”

By this time Brerewood, who had sought for this respite knowing how much depended on his coolness and self-possession, had taken his refreshing draught, and prepared the lines of his reply. He stood up on the boundary-ledge between the two rooms which has been described, and thus his tall and graceful figure towered far above all the rest. His countenance was calm, but tinged with a certain melancholy reserve, which conveyed the impression of a righteous man suffering under wrongful suspicion.

I could not help admiring his commanding demeanour, his radiant eye glancing defiantly over the comparatively small men that composed the assembly, and his noble attitude, which seemed to betoken conscious innocence and moral superiority. And then I thought, wonderingly and regretfully, of the egotism, insincerity, and vindictiveness that, to the exclusion of nearly every virtue, resided beneath

this fair exterior. *Sic decipimur specie recti.*

It was in the following terms that Brerewood addressed the meeting,—

“Gentlemen,—the simplicity of truth will make mine a short story. I have more than once been to Mr. Frampton’s office. I have never seen or spoken to Mr. Frampton in my life; but I have from time to time extracted from his office information that has been of the utmost value to the cause which all of us have at heart. One of the persons employed by Frampton, and who has access to important secrets, came under my influence, and through that channel I have been able to secure more intelligence and to convey more intimations, advice, warnings, and suggestions to my colleagues and confederates than through any other means. It was at first to obtain, afterwards to utilize, that influence, that I paid those visits to the Secret Service Office which have subjected me to this shameful attack. Persecution suffered where thanks are deserved! It would be cruel as well as ungrateful to disclose the name of my friend in that office, and I utterly refuse to do so. Born of a loyal

family, bred in loyal principles, only a slight effort was required on my part to win him into loyal practices. Having won him, I had to call occasionally to collect intelligence from him, little dreaming that spies were tracking my footsteps and misconstruing my motives. This short, plain statement disposes of the case. Is the exuberance of my zeal to be a fault or a virtue in your eyes? If I was bold enough to venture into the enemy's camp to reconnoitre his position for your advantage, is it I who am to apologize to you, or is it you who are beholden to me? Was it an agreeable task, think you, to plunge into that den of iniquity, and at the imminent risk of detection to carry off trophies for you from under the very eye of our most deadly enemy, Frampton? Are my merits to be themselves the cause of your displeasure? No, surely not! No! my labours demand your recognition, not your censure; and I claim from you—not forgiveness, it is for me to forgive your unjust suspicions—but simply justice: and that implies your gratitude and your thanks!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CATASTROPHE.

THIS speech, which Brerewood delivered with every grace of elocution, and in tones at once powerful and melodious, created a deep impression, and turned the tide of popular feeling in his favour. As the applause which it elicited died away, Sir Wilfred Lannerdale, who thought his dignity would be compromised if he any longer remained a mute spectator, and now felt secure that Brerewood's was the winning side, resolved to speak,—

“Gentlemen,” he said, “I congratulate Mr. Brerewood on his eloquent refutation of a calumnious aspersion. His statement is a clear and straightforward one. He assures us that he never in his life spoke to Mr. Frampton, whom he very justly characterizes as our

deadliest foe, and that it was to plot against him, not with him, that he frequented his office. That surely disposes of the question."

This feeble iteration of Brerewood's clever defence weakened its effect. It was an anti-climax. After his glowing periods, Lannerdale's commonplaces fell flat. The audience, disenchanted, forgot the form, and now looked to the substance, of Brerewood's argument. From a distant part of the room Goldart's thin but penetrating voice made itself heard,—

"It's a pity—at least, I think so—that Mr. Brerewood called on his friend at Frampton's office—during office-hours—which was dangerous, when his friend might just as well have called at Mr. Brerewood's house in the evening, which was safe."

A titter from some, and "Oh! oh!" from others, was all the response which Goldart's remark elicited.

Father Delany saw that the time had now come for striking the decisive blow. With his usual tact he had waited for the inevitable reaction that was to follow the first impression produced by Brerewood's speech. That speech, with its tissue of falsehoods, had removed from

Father Delany's mind every particle of doubt as to Brerewood's guilt, and he was determined by every available means to expose him and thus deprive him of the power of working further injury to the cause. He stood forward and spoke as follows,—

“Sir John Lester and gentlemen! Mr. Brerewood abjures all connexion with Mr. Frampton. If so, 'tis well. He assures us that he has never seen or spoken to Mr. Frampton in his life. If so, 'tis well. But what if Mr. Frampton himself should step forward and claim intimate connexion with Mr. Brerewood? What if he should affirm that he has seen and spoken to Mr. Brerewood a multitude of times?”

Renewed attention and excitement on the part of the assembly. “Is Frampton here?” “Which is Frampton?” “How dare he show himself here?” were the utterances buzzed about the room.

Brerewood turned pale. A presentiment came over him that some heavy blow was impending. He instinctively felt, as it were, the swing of the sword ere he received its stroke. Could Frampton possibly have turned against

him and betrayed him? *Et tu, Brute?* Was all the world playing him false? Was he to be transfixed by his own weapons?

“Frampton is not here,” resumed Father Delany. “If he were here you would not listen to him; or, if you did listen, you would not believe him. For you know that he would not scruple to give false testimony to screen an accomplice. But you have better than his verbal, you have his written evidence. Here is a letter written by Mr. Frampton himself, not intended for the public eye, for secrecy is specially enjoined,—not addressed to any political connexion, whom he might have some interest in deceiving,—but written to his own son in the openness of familiar intimacy.”

Loud cries of “Read! read!” interrupted the speaker.

“The letter,” continued Father Delany, “is in the possession of Countess Molina, who will hand it to Sir John Lester, and no doubt he will read to you those passages in it which relate to Mr. Brerewood.”

Zillah accordingly placed the letter in the hands of Sir John, who after perusing it said,—

“This letter, which bears on it every indica-

tion of authenticity, is certainly very significant. Is it your pleasure that I should read to you those paragraphs which specially refer to Mr. Brerewood?"

"Yes! yes!" from all parts of the room.

"The letter alludes," continued Sir John, "to a contemplated duel between Mr. Brerewood and a Mr. A. (the name it is useless to disclose), in which Mr. Frampton's son was to figure as one of the seconds, and it proceeds thus, 'My relations with Mr. Brerewood for a long time past have been of so friendly and peculiar a nature that I cannot allow our name to be mixed with this affair. It is of course of great political importance that my secret connexion with Mr. Brerewood should remain undivulged, and I only reveal it to you because present circumstances render it necessary.' That is all, but it appears to me that it is enough."

The meeting was stirred to its depth by this revelation. In both rooms people grouped themselves into little knots in order to exchange ideas. A low murmur at first gradually swelled into a loud hum. Angry glances were shot at Brerewood, and at last indignation found its

utterance in groans, hisses, and cries of "Down with the traitor!" "Down with Judas Iscariot!" "Keep the doors; don't let him escape," and other confused and tumultuous shouts. I had meanwhile approached somewhat nearer to the central figures, and was close to Lopps, who said to me,—

"I'll tell you what, Mr. Allerton, I'll lay a groat that that 'ere letter is the one I was to bring to master, and lost it."

I thought it very likely, and called out,—

"What, Sir John, is the date of that letter?"

He looked, and answered,—

"29th May, which is Saturday last."

"Then, sure enough, that is it," said Lopps.

Meanwhile, Brerewood stood as immovable as an antique statue. His undaunted attitude reminded me of Lucan's *Meruitque timeri nil metuens*. His glance ranged over the angry uplifted heads that chafed around him, at once proud, defiant, and reproachful, and as the storm increased in vehemence that glance became more than daring, it hardened into an expression of supreme contempt. His right hand grasped the hilt of his sword, thus

indicating his determination, at whatever odds, to repel force by force.

For a short time the people were held in check by the majesty of his calm demeanour and imposing carriage. But passion is contagious. Each individual in a crowd acts on, and is reacted on by the other. Excitement, like flame, instead of suffering exhaustion, acquires intensity by being spread. The more work it does, the more it is capable of doing. It gains strength by the very wideness of its diffusion. *Vires acquirit eundo.*

Sir John Lester held a hurried conference with Captain Letheby and others of the gentlemen who had accompanied him, and before popular clamour had condensed itself into actual deeds of violence he interfered to avert the outbreak.

“Gentlemen!” he exclaimed, in tones sufficiently loud to divert public attention to himself, “let us not be hasty. This is an important issue,—important to ourselves, since on us rests the responsibility of sifting the truth, and, above all, important to the accused, as raising him, if acquitted, higher than ever in our estimation, and consigning him, if

convicted, to the very lowest depths of infamy."

Loud plaudits here indicated the assent of the meeting.

Sir John went on,—

"But for Heaven's sake, in any case, no violence. We are here to judge, we are here to condemn even, if so compelled by clear proofs, but we are not here to punish!"

Murmurs of dissent showed that all did not acquiesce in that view.

At this juncture, our cynical friend, Tim Burford, while fully convinced of Brerewood's guilt, tried to make a diversion in his favour.

"I want to know," cried he, "how it is that a private letter from Frampton to his son found its way into the hands of that woman?"

"A very pertinent question!" replied Sir John Lester, "and one which I ought to have thought of before reading the letter. Has it come before us by fair means, and had we any right to make use of it? Speak, madam," addressing Zillah; "how came you possessed of this document?"

"I found it," curtly replied she, laughing inwardly at Lester's scruples, and utterly

indifferent to any amount of blame she might incur, now that her end had been obtained.

"Found it! What, open?"

"No, unopened."

"Then who opened it?"

"I did, and retained it to apply to the purpose which it has served."

"Then it has never reached the person for whom it was intended; and we have unknowingly been accomplices in a dishonourable act!"

"'Tis no dishonourable act," replied Zillah boldly, "to intercept the enemy's dispatches."

"Lies all!" suddenly exclaimed Brerewood, seeing a faint chance of recovering his position, "Lies all! That letter is a forgery."

I was determined that this allegation of his should be rebutted, as all his others had been, and I came forward to address Sir John Lester. As soon as Brerewood saw me, his eyes flashed with fury.

"Aha! Francis Allerton!" he cried, "you here too. This appears to be a rendezvous for all my enemies. Coward! this a safer place for you, you think, than the fields behind Montagu House!"

I made no reply, but simply waved my hand at him contemptuously.

“Sir John,” said I, “I can explain, though I cannot justify, the means by which Countess Molina obtained possession of the letter in question, and the same explanation will remove all doubt as to its authenticity.”

I then gave an account of Lopps having lost a letter which had been intrusted by one of Mr. Frampton’s servants at the Secret Service Office for delivery to Mr. Frampton, junior, to whom the said Lopps was serving-man; and that there could be no doubt of the identity of the letter, as it was dated on the very day that Lopps had taken charge of it, and moreover he had called on his way at the Turk’s Head, where he had seen the countess, where he must have dropped it, and where no doubt she had picked it up. I also added that Lopps, the serving-man, was now here, and would answer any questions that might be put to him on the subject.

This explanation seemed to satisfy all who heard it as to the authenticity of the letter; but Sir John said that he would ask the man a few questions, and I brought Lopps forward. He showed no symptom of being at all abashed

by his prominent appearance in public, except that he kept twirling the ribbon round his hat from right to left during Sir John's questions, and then twirling it back from left to right during his replies to them.

"Do you think," asked Sir John, "Mr.—eh?—Lopps—Mr. Lopps, that you could identify the letter in question, if I were to submit it to your inspection?"

"No doubt of it, my lord, 'specially if there's a coffee stains upon it."

"Coffee stains, my man? Why that?"

"Coz most likely it may have dropped where the coffee was spilt."

"What coffee?"

"Why, what she poured out."

"She! who?—the countess?"

"No, no! shē's Mr. Dillon."

"Well, who? But never mind; that has nothing to do with it. You say that if it is the letter you lost, it most likely has coffee stains on it? Captain Letheby, you have the letter; please to look at it, or hand it to me."

An examination was made, and, sure enough, two large blotches, evidently caused by some such liquid as coffee, were visible on the

address of the letter. It was submitted to Lopps, who immediately slapped his thigh, and exclaimed,—

“That’s the note, my lord; I’ll swear to it now.”

While this was passing Brerewood had been “chewing the cud of bitter fancy.”

His heart, disguise it as he might from outward observation, sank within him. Was this what he had come to? His genius, his natural gifts, his varied acquirements, his vast experience of men, his versatile energy unrestrained by scruples, all of which he had brought to bear to crush his enemies and ensure his triumph, all to end in defeat and ignominy! His schemes to revenge himself on Macrae had left Macrae master of the field. His schemes to render the countess powerless had given her the power to harm him. His schemes to supplant me were operating to his own disadvantage. All his contrivances had by some fatality recoiled on himself. The very letter that now told most against him was the outcome of his desire to annoy old Frampton. How could he have foreseen that Frampton would have written such a letter, and that it should so

miraculously have fallen into the hands of his enemies? It brought strongly to his mind Ovid's pentameter, "*Heu ! patior telis vulnera facta meis.*" He accused fate (did he mean Providence?) of unjust and cruel partisanship against him. He was an ill-used man. His enemies had all the luck. But he might still mar their triumph.

"Allerton!" he cried out to me in a voice of thunder. I was standing by, and had just accosted Zillah with a view of asking her to grant me an interview, when Brerewood's exclamation drew my attention—"Allerton," he went on, "you are the inventor of all those lies about losing and finding that letter. That woman in the masquerade dress—your shameless mother there—never got the letter by those means. It is you who basely purloined that letter from your friend Frampton, and gave it her to use against me. Liar and coward!" and he pointed his finger at me with scorn.

"Sir," I replied coldly, for in truth I was quite unmoved, "your misfortune makes you sacred to me. I take no heed of words dictated by the insanity of despair. You are protected by the perils of your position."

My coolness inflamed his fury beyond all bounds of control, and in (as I had expressed it) the insanity of his despair he fiercely drew his sword, exclaiming,—

“What, bastard, do you jeer at me!” and with the words, “Die, then!” he made a rapid and desperate thrust at me. Mechanically, and with the swift instinct which makes our movements, on the sudden imminence of danger, purely automatic, I swerved to one side to avoid the blow. I did avoid it, but, alas! poor Zillah, who stood immediately behind me, received the stroke intended for me, and such was the violence of the lunge, that the sword pierced her through and through.

A moment of stupefaction was succeeded by a cry of horror from the spectators. Before Brerewood could finish the sneering words, “It does not matter which,” Philip had sprung like a tiger at the throat of the murderer, who then loosened his hold of the hilt, and Zillah fell into my arms, with the fatal weapon still sheathed in her body. Brerewood, notwithstanding his giant strength, found it impossible to throw off his assailant, or to extricate himself from his grasp; for Philip, who, in spite of

his diminutive size and deformed shape, combined great muscular power with the litheness of a cat, clung to him stubbornly, and made frantic efforts to reach his opponent's throat, in order to strangle him. In their struggle the combatants fell heavily to the ground. There they were separated by the interference of Captain Letheby and some other of the Protestant gentlemen, who had to exert all their physical force to restrain Philip from making another spring at the slayer of his sister.

During this conflict two medical men who had taken part in the meeting came forward to attend to Zillah, and I the more readily gave her into their care as I had to fly to the assistance of my aunt. She had been standing near Brerewood all the time: her keen sense of right and wrong on the one hand, and her woman's enduring faith in the honesty of a friend on the other, had alternately swayed her during the stormy discussions of that evening. At last, when the weight of evidence became irresistible, when illusion was no longer possible, and the vile perfidiousness of her hero was made manifest, the revulsion of feeling

was extreme. Her previous admiration and regard were converted into aversion and contempt; and those feelings culminated into horror when Brerewood added murder to his other crimes. The deed was perpetrated under her very eye, and she was all but besprinkled with the blood of the victim. She turned faint, her knees trembled, and she would have fallen but for the wall against which she leaned. Moreover, when Philip and his antagonist, in their scuffle, fell to the ground, they hustled against her, and her legs and feet were much hurt and bruised. The rush, too, of the crowd to the scene of conflict was tossing her to and fro, and she must soon have sunk on the floor, perhaps to be trampled under foot, had I not fortunately rescued her just in time.

When I reached her, we neither spoke a word, but, taking her round the waist, I painfully made my way with her through the crowd that was rushing madly in the opposite direction, with loud threats against Brerewood, till we got to the back seats, which were quite deserted. Then did she give way. She bent her head upon my shoulder, and bursting into tears she exclaimed,—

“Oh, Frank, Frank! take me away from this scene of horrors. Do take me away!”

“The moment I can, aunt. The passage and staircase are now obstructed by a mass of angry and struggling men. We must wait till the way is clear.”

The confusion was indescribable. We could make out that the leaders and the most respectable portion of both parties were trying to save Brerewood from the fury of the rest, who appeared determined to inflict immediate punishment on him, and immolate him on the spot.

“Children,” we could hear the voice of Father Delany thundering out, “this holy place has already been desecrated enough; will you pollute it by another murder?”

“Blood for blood!” cried others; “he shall not escape us!”

Apparently, however, Brerewood’s protectors were successful, for surrounded by them he had got out of the room, and must have arrived at some part of the passage or landing that led to the top of the stairs when we heard a loud crash, as if some part of the building had given way, succeeded by mingled shouts, groans, and

yells, as well as by cries of surprise, pain, and exultation.

This is what had happened. Philip, in whom the excitement had aroused all the vehemence of his worst passions, and over whom the evil part of his nature had obtained complete mastery, was raging furiously at being kept away from the object of his wrath. But six or eight strong men interposed between them. All his efforts were vain. They had succeeded, notwithstanding the pressure of the adverse crowd, in leading him safe to very near the spot where the landing ends and the stairs begin.

“A little more,” thought Philip, “and he will escape!”

The idea was madness! And the men who thus shielded him from deserved retribution, how cruel of them! It was no sister of theirs that had fallen; and so they pitilessly prevented a brother from avenging her blood! The fiends!—accomplices in a brutal crime! Oh, how to get at that man before he is set free to exult over his black deed!

“Merciful Heaven,” he ejaculated, “inspire me!”

As though his unmerciful prayer had been

answered, an idea suddenly struck him. In another moment he had acted on it. The stairs that led to the upper rooms over the chapel, of course overhung sideways the landing that headed the stairs below. This landing was now being traversed by Brerewood, surrounded by his escort of defenders. Their advance, however, was slow, owing to the mass of malcontents who hung on the skirts of the protecting group, threatening and vociferating, and through this mass the threatened man, who hugged the balustrade, and his guard four or five deep, could make but tardy progress. Philip ran up the higher flight of stairs, and selecting the point which directly overhung the spot which the procession had then reached, he nimbly clambered over the banisters and, poising himself for a moment, dropped heavily on to Brerewood's shoulders, there happening to be a small intervening gap between those shoulders and the man who stood next. One universal roar, partly of dismay, partly of applause, hailed this achievement. Quick as lightning, and before any one had time to interfere, Philip had his hands round Brerewood's throat with a deadly grasp, and he might have

effected his guilty purpose were it not that an unlooked-for accident gave a new direction to the course of events. Brerewood was making gigantic efforts to extricate himself from Philip's grip. For that purpose he turned round and exerted all his enormous strength to press and jam Philip so tightly against the balustrade as to compel him to relinquish his hold, while at the same time those around used all their force to detach Philip's hands from Brerewood's throat. But all this pressure was too much for the poor old worm-eaten balustrade. It suddenly gave way with a thundering crash, and the men were precipitated into the passage below.

Few besides the two mortal foes received any very dangerous hurts, for their limbs were free, and could be used to assist in saving themselves. But it was otherwise with Brerewood and Philip. Interlaced as they were in a death-grip, they could not break their fall, and they dropped heavily, side by side, on the rough floor, with a dull thud like a piece of lead. The doctors who had been attending to Zillah upstairs in Dame Horrebow's own room, whither the wounded woman had been con-

veyed, were summoned down to this fresh catastrophe. They found Brerewood insensible. His head had struck against the floor, and concussion of the brain was apprehended. Philip had his right arm fractured, and one of his ribs broken. What other internal injuries either might have sustained could not then be discovered.

Impromptu litters were soon constructed, and the same men who a minute before would have torn Brerewood to pieces now tenderly assisted in placing him gently on the brancard, and volunteered to convey him safely to his home. Philip was treated with the same attention, and still more reverence. His chief injury, apparently, was a broken arm; but his legs must also have sustained some damage, for he could not use them. A litter was constructed for him, and Lopps, who was indefatigable in his attentions to him, accompanied him home, while Father Delany preceded them, in order to break the news to Mrs. Centry and hasten preparations for his reception.

CHAPTER XV.

ZILLAH'S ATONEMENT.

AFTER some minutes' rest my aunt felt better, and she requested me to go upstairs and inquire after the wounded woman, which I willingly did. On knocking at the door, and being told to "come in," I entered the room. It was of good size, and of good proportions, with ornamental panels and elaborate cornices; but on the other hand, while scrupulously clean, the furniture was of the scantiest and plainest description. There was neither carpet nor curtains; a small round table, over which a brown-holland cover was thrown, five or six wooden chairs, a kind of dresser or sideboard of plain deal in a recess, a nest of three shelves containing a few old books, and some half-dozen prints pasted on cardboard, all on saintly subjects

(save one, which represented the church of St. Peter at Rome), constituted, with one exception, the garniture of the room.

That exception was the recess between the fireplace and the window, which was occupied by a species of altar, on which stood an elaborately carved ivory crucifix. At the back there was, leaning a little forward, a large and finely executed oil painting of the Virgin and Child, encased in a gorgeously chased frame, massively gilt. On the altar, one at each side of the crucifix, stood a pair of magnificent bronzes, between two and three feet in height, representing women in a kneeling and devotional attitude, from whose hands, clasped and outstretched, there sprang a small receptacle, in each of which was a wax taper lighted. Two curtains, of rich brocaded silk, hung with rings on brass rods, could be drawn together so as to inclose and conceal the recess, but were now pulled back and kept open by silken cords and tassels. The altar itself was covered by a damask cloth white as snow, and in front hung an apron of white satin, on which was embroidered, in golden threads, a Maltese cross as large as the space would admit. A ledge,

two or three inches high, and two feet wide, extended in front of the altar, and was covered by a thick carpet of brilliant colours. Nothing could be more striking than the contrast between the rude simplicity and nakedness of the room and the ornate splendour of this nook consecrated to devotional purposes.

As I entered the room, an old lady, dressed in black serge, and whose snowy hair just peeped from under a linen cap which hardly exceeded it in whiteness, rose from the kneeling-stool (which the French call a *prie-dieu*, and some a fald-stool) before the altar, at which she had been worshipping.

Notwithstanding the coarseness of her attire, any one could see that Dame Horrebrow was a lady. Old age, and the emaciation produced by her self-imposed asceticism, had not yet bent her form. Tall and erect, she advanced slowly, and looked at me with inquiring eyes.

“Madam,” I said, “I beg you to excuse this intrusion, but I am anxious to make inquiries as to the condition of the ill-fated woman whom your kindness—”

“Whom Almighty God,” she interposed, correcting me, “has committed to my charge.

Poor thing! The doctors have pronounced her wound to be mortal, but she still lives. Are you a relation?"

"No," I stammered out, for I was overcome by the sudden recollection that she had claimed me for her son. "No relation. She is the sister of Mr. Centry, who has also met with severe injuries, and has been taken home."

"My poor chapel!" she exclaimed, with tears in her eyes, "to be so desecrated! I lent it for the purposes of peace. I was told by Father Delany that the meeting was to be one of harmony and reconciliation, and no doubt he thought so. But lo, it has become the scene of strife and bloodshed!—an arena for the display of wrath, hatred, revenge, and all the worst passions of man. The house of God to be turned into a slaughter-house! and my doing!"

And under the strong impulse of her emotion, she flew to the *prie-dieu*, cast herself on her knees, and fervently prayed, "O Heavenly Father, grant me forgiveness, and thou, Mother of God, intercede for me! *Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis, nunc et in horâ mortis nostræ. Amen.*"

I was touched with compunction; for had I

not been one of the chief contrivers of the plot which had led to the awful catastrophe? Was not my enmity to Brerewood at the very bottom and foundation of it? If this lady felt such remorse for her innocent complicity, what then ought mine to be, who was one of the main actors in the tragedy? I felt humbled and rebuked, and, seeing the lady still engaged in prayer, I silently and reverently stole out of the room.

On rejoining my aunt I found her better, but very anxious to get home, and, as by this time the passage was quite clear, we soon left the house, but not without noticing, as we went downstairs, the remains of the broken balustrade, which were strewed about the passage. Fortunately, when we turned into Fetter Lane I heard a welcome sound not very far distant.

“Cha, cha, cha, cha, cha, cha, cha, cha!” trolled out, with voluble repetition, a hoarse, gruff voice, producing an effect very much like the croak of a marsh-frog or the purring notes of the nightjar. I was very much pleased, for my aunt was faint and weak, and her steps were already tottering. I hastened to engage the sedan-chair, whose bearers were thus

announcing in their accustomed jargon that it was for hire. I handed my aunt in, walked by its side, and we soon arrived at the good old house in Red Lion Square.

My uncle was very glad to see us, for he was getting rather alarmed at his wife's prolonged absence. I gave him a very concise sketch of what had occurred, while my aunt, who felt faint and sick, and who would take nothing, hurried up to bed. Before she went she said, "God bless you, Frank," and kissed me. Such an effusion from so undemonstrative a person as my aunt, who had always confined her caresses to a formal embrace on a birthday, quite thrilled me, and I took courage to inquire whether I might not be allowed to see Alice. I was informed, however, that she was on a visit for two or three days at the Broughtons', —a visit which had, no doubt, been contrived so as to ensure Alice's absence on the evening of her mother's political expedition.

After ascertaining that all his wife required was rest and quiet, my uncle, who was exceedingly kind and cordial, wanted me to stay and give him a detailed account of the events of the night; but I was so impatient to

talk the whole matter over with Charley that I framed an excuse, and, promising to call the next day, I proceeded home. I found Charley waiting for me. I told him all; and we remained up talking over everything and everybody till such a late hour that at last exhausted nature put a candlestick in my hand and sent me to bed.

The next day, early, I called at Red Lion Square, and learned that my aunt had passed a good night, and was better, and that my uncle had gone on to the Broughtons' to fetch Alice home.

On my return I found Lopps wishing to speak to me.

"Please, sir," said he, "I'm sorry to tell you Mr. Dillon's very bad, and they say she won't live long. He wants to see you very bad, and will you call on her at once, please?"

"How did you get the message?"

"Well, I went, you see, to ask after Mr. Centry this morning. He's all right: barring his ankle's out of joint, and his arm broken in two between his elbow and shoulder, and one of his ribs is cracked, there's nothing the matter with him; so the young angel's a-waiting on

him, and the old angel went last night to wait on his sister, Mr. Dillon."

"The old angel?"

"Yes; that's Mrs. Centry, and there's no good judge of angels as won't swear she is one;—well, she has sent word to me that I'm to bring you at once on to Mr. Dillon, as she has something on her mind as she wishes to throw off."

"By all means; I am ready."

"Come along, then, sir. Poor fellow! they say the sword ran right through her wittle parts, and that she can't live over the day."

On entering the bed-room (good Dame Horrebrow's own) where Zillah lay, I found Mrs. Centry and Father Delany with her. She was very pale and very weak from loss of blood, but she was quite sensible, and could talk in faint tones. She held out her hand to me; I took it—poor, weak, pale hand, moist with a feverish clamminess and yet cold.

"Speak for me, Marie," she whispered.

Mrs. Centry held a paper in her hand.

"Mr. Allerton," she said, "I am to be dear Zillah's mouthpiece. She has done you an in-

justice, and wishes to repair it. Read this paper."

It had been written early that morning, at Zillah's dictation, by Father Delany, signed by the dying woman, and witnessed by the priest and Mrs. Centry. It ran thus:—

"I, Zillah, known as the Countess Molina, being on the point of death, do hereby certify that Francis Allerton, the youth who has been brought up in the house of his uncle—Mr. M. Uppenham—is the legitimate son, born in Paris, of Andrew Allerton and his wife Henriette; and that he is not, as I have for my own ends occasionally asserted, Frederick, my illegitimate son, who died in his infancy. And I crave pardon of God and man for this and other deceits which I have practised during my ill-spent life. And let Francis Allerton have the locket with a small miniature of his father, which will be found round my neck, when I am dead. Pray for me."

Full of joy and gratitude for a declaration that so effectually cleared my future path of the dark shade that threatened to overhang it, I looked kindly and tenderly at Zillah, who again put out her hand, and in faint tones uttered the words,—

“Forgive me, Frank!”

I raised her hand to my lips, and said, earnestly,—

“Oh, Zillah! may Almighty God forgive my many trespasses as freely and thoroughly as I forgive you your few trespasses against me!”

“Amen,” devoutly responded Father Delany, adding, “and now, Mr. Allerton, please to retire. Her last worldly task is now accomplished. The past and the present are slipping away from her, and the few moments that remain must be devoted to the future, which is becoming her sole inheritance. See! her eyes are closing from fatigue; your absence will be a kindness!”

I took her limp hand and again raised it to my lips; then, with a sympathetic glance at her, which she acknowledged by a perceptible smile, I retired, much moved and excited.

In the evening, Charley and I got busily chatting over our dish of tea, for he had actually stayed at home for the express purpose.

“Upon my word, Frank,” said he, “you are a lucky fellow; you are the very converse of that unfortunate wight who, as I remember reading somewhere, had his pockets full of

pearls and diamonds overnight, and found them, next morning, all changed into pieces of slate. Now you, on the contrary, one day have your pocket full of slates—”

“Slates!” cried I; “what do you mean?”

“Yes, bits of trashy slate—a quarrel with your relations, a rival to your love, a doubt upon your birth, and three or four duels on your hands.”

“Oh, yes, I see now. Yes, the slates are vanishing; but, Charley, where are the jewels?”

“Wait, impatient youth! the fairy has removed your distracting woes, and, lo, you grumble because she has not at once placed you at the summit of bliss!—base ingratitude!”

“Indeed, Charley, I am very conscious of my good fortune, and very grateful for it.”

“Grateful, indeed! You ought to be joyful!”

“Indeed, I am full of joy!”

“Then you have a very tame way of showing it. You do not seem to enjoy your joy! Hang it, man, why don’t you dance round the table?—sing *Io!* pæans? fling your wig into the air? I’ll tell you what, Frank, I’ll send

for two or three jolly fellows, and we'll make a night of it, eh?"

"Hush, Charley! pray remember that some very melancholy incidents are connected with the late events. Think of poor Zillah!"

"Ah, true; I had forgotten."

At that moment Lopps, whom we had sent round to collect the latest intelligence, came to make his reports.

"Bad news," said he, "of poor Mr. Dillon—she's dead; and that Brerewood ought to be hung!"

"Dead!" I exclaimed; "poor thing! but it was inevitable. Peace be with her! She ended her life with an act of surpassing kindness to me!"

"When did she die?" asked Charley.

"About two hours after she saw Mr. Allerton. Please, sir," addressing me, "the priest asked me to give you this," and he handed me a packet. I knew that it was the miniature of my father, which she had worn for these long years; but I did not open it then. It was neither the time nor the place.

"Then," added Lopps, "I went on to the Turk's Head. I saw both the angels, for the

old one had come back from her nursing. They told me that Mr. Centry had not been so much cut up at his sister's death as they thought he would, or else he did not show it. He was getting on first rate. He could not sit up 'coz of his leg, nor turn round 'coz of his arm, nor eat 'coz of his fever, nor sleep 'coz of his pains; but, barring these, he was quite well."

"But what," I inquired, "of Mrs. Uppenham?"

"All right, sir. Your uncle was in, your aunt was up, and Miss Alice was back. No doubt you'll see them all, if you'll call to-morrow."

"Did you see any of them?"

"Well, sir, the upstairs bell rung, and I coaxed old Antony to let me go with him as far as the drawing-room door, and peep through the chink when it opened. Glad to say, I had a good view of the tip of Miss Alice's elbow, as it hung on the back of her chair."

"The tip of her elbow?" asked Charley, laughing. "How did it look?"

"Very well, thank you, sir. Much the same as usual."

“That ’s very cheering. *Ex pede Herculem, ex brachio Venerem*. I strongly advise you, Frank, to go to-morrow and inspect the remainder of her.”

“I don’t know what ’s up,” continued Lopps. “You know old Tony never speaks till he’s spoken to; but just as I was coming away he lays his left hand on my shoulder, and with his right gives me a smart dig in the ribs, same time poking his mouth right into my ear, bawls out, ‘Why not? Eh?’ I was quite taken aback.”

“The playful old cow! What did you reply, Lopps?”

“Why, sir, I gave him back his dig, heaped measure, and bawled in his ear, ‘Mustn’t say!’ and left him. When I got to the hall door I turned round, and saw him rubbing his ribs, but splitting with dumb laughter, for he’s one of them chaps as one sees laughing, but never hears ’em.”

“Well, did you inquire after Mr. Brerewood?”

“Of course I did, sir; and now comes a stunner. Limbo (you know his man, Limbo, a lump of conceit, pert as a page, brazen as a

door-knocker, would lie the nose off your face) —well, Limbo opens to me. ‘Good day, Mr. Limbo,’ says I, civilly, ‘I’m come to know how Mr. Brerewood is this morning.’ ‘Vastly kind of you, I swear,’ says he (you know his nasty drawling, sneering way), ‘but really—a—I don’t happen to know.’ ‘Haven’t you been up to ax then, lately?’ ‘Oh—ah—why, you see, he’s not at home.’ ‘Not at home! Hasn’t he come home, then?’ ‘La, Mr. Lopps, you look like Priam’s curtains! I don’t expect him home for a fortnight!’ ‘Where is he, then?’ ‘Gone to his—a—fond friends in Devonshire. If you want him, address Briarwood, near somewhere or other.’ ‘But I saw him myself yesterday. Wasn’t he brought home here last night in a very bad way?’ ‘He did come home last night in a chair, with a slight knock on his head.’ ‘A slight knock?’ ‘Well, there was a good-sized bump. Those horrid creaking signs, you know. A heavy Golden Fleece fell on his skull, just as he was bowing to some ladies in Fleet Street.’ ‘Good gracious! are you sure that that’s the true cause of the bump?’ ‘A man of the world, Mr. Lopps, never makes sure of nothing. That’s what

master told me. But, be it so or not so, Mr. Brerewood gets up this morning as fresh as a rose, orders a poshay, makes me pack up a few things, and is off to Devonshire like a shot. I'm to follow in two days with the rest of the slops.' What do you say to that, sir?"

"It's either a miracle or a lie," replied Charley; "chances rather in favour of the latter hypothesis. What did you say, Lopp?"

"I looked hard at Limbo, sir, but couldn't catch his eye, for he was staring at my shoe-buckles, as prim as a prude. At last says I, for I couldn't just then find anything else to say, 'That's a rum go,' says I. 'Yes,' says he, 'this world's full of rum goes; and—a—if that's all you have to say, I must go and pack up the traps, so good-bye!' and he slams the door in my face."

"I will bet a ducat, Frank," said Charley, "that all the time Brerewood lay *perdu* upstairs, dangerously ill. That fall would have shivered a marble bust. I have a great respect for that Limbo; his lying power is evidently of the highest order."

Lopps was about to reply, when he was summoned down by a thundering rap at our passage-door below.

In a minute or two Lopps ushered in Sir Jasper Bigshow and Mr. Gayley. After the usual ceremonies of reception, I introduced Mr. Charles Frampton to them.

“Mr. Allerton,” said Sir Jasper, “we have done ourselves the honour to wait on you as an act of justice due at once to you and to ourselves.”

I bowed with the proudest humility.

“Till to-day,” he continued, “we conceived it to be our bounden duty to fasten on you an insult which would naturally necessitate your fastening on us a mortal quarrel. It had become right in the nature of things that your blood or ours should be shed; propriety and the laws of civilized society had so ordained it. Do you follow me?”

I bowed again, silently, but with the severest courtesy.

“But to-day,” resumed the pompous orator, “intelligence has reached us which leads us to believe that our imputations had been levelled at the wrong person, and that it was Mr. Brere-

wood, and not Mr. Allerton, against whom they should have been directed."

"I am very glad, Sir Jasper," I replied, with measured dignity, "that you have thus retracted your charge against me; and I deem it creditable to your sense of right that you should have taken so early an opportunity of doing me justice."

"My friend, Sir John Lester," said Mr. Gayley, "gave me this morning such an account of what had occurred at last night's meeting that not a doubt remained as to Brerewood's being a dishonourable scoundrel. You must forgive us for having given credence to the false knave to the detriment of the true man."

Mr. Gayley's hearty genial tones were much more grateful to me than the stiff, formal periods of his sententious companion, and I replied cordially,—

"After so frank and manly an acknowledgment it would ill beseem me to retain any resentment for—nay, any remembrance of,—the charge you once brought against me, and, on my part I beg to withdraw the letter which I wrote you in consequence of it, and in which I demanded satisfaction."

“That is as you please,” said Sir Jasper, fearing, in his over-sensitiveness, lest his meaning should have been construed into a desire to avoid fighting. “We came here to withdraw our charge against you (it was our duty), not to ask you to withdraw your challenge to us. That must be entirely as you may think fit.”

“Why, of course,” said Gayley, “Mr. Allerton is not such a fire-eater as to insist on our cutting each other’s throats when all grounds for it have been removed.”

“I do not know that, Mr. Gayley,” said the susceptible knight. “It was you who urged me to pay Mr. Allerton this visit, and I should not like to have it said, or even thought, that one of its objects was to save myself from an impending duel.”

“I really do not see, Sir Jasper,” said I, half amused, half nettled, “how I can do more than I have done. I, the challenger, withdraw the challenge; but, of course, if you, the challenged, object, why—”

“Stop, Mr. Allerton,” cried Gayley. “I, as one of the challenged, accept your withdrawal; and I am sure that my friend, Bigshow, who, after all, is a peaceable man—”

"A peaceable man!" indignantly exclaimed Sir Jasper; "I deny it. It is a most unwarrantable insinuation. It conveys to these gentlemen an idea of weakness and pusillanimity, which never attached yet to a Bigshow. Peaceable, indeed! I appeal to you, gentlemen, is Mr. Gayley justified in branding me with the epithet 'peaceable'?"

"Most certainly not," replied Charley; "quite the contrary. A war-horse champing the bit and pawing the ground—a loud trumpet, full of sound and fury!—a fiery and implacable Bellona!—that is more your description."

I was terribly afraid lest Charley's ironical banter should lead to a worse explosion; but, no! Sir Jasper was highly delighted, and turning to Gayley, with a condescending smile, he said,—

"You see, Gayley, that these gentlemen differ widely from you in their estimate of my temperament, and after their handsome tribute to my spirit I can no longer hesitate to accede to Mr. Allerton's proposition. Therefore, gentlemen, I hope that as friends we part now, ever as friends to meet again."

We all joined heartily in that sentiment, and bright sunshine succeeded to the storm-cloud.

"I may add," said Mr. Gayley, "that Mr. Gordon, who was one of the belligerent powers, is now in Scotland; but I take it on myself to guarantee that he will become a party to our present treaty of peace and amity. As to Brerewood, we disclaim all further connexion with him. I do not suppose that he can or will now meet you; but, if he does, it will not be with me for his second."

"Do you know," I asked, "where he is and in what state of health?"

"Oh, yes!" he replied, "everybody at our coffee-house knows all about him, only it unfortunately happens that, out of the fifty statements positively made from the best authority, no two agree. He is dangerously ill in bed; he shammed dead at the meeting and escaped without a scratch; he ran a Jesuit through the body; a madman sprang upon him and bit a large piece out of his cheek; there is nothing the matter with him, and he left for Northumberland this morning; he was not at the meeting at all,—it was another man of the same name; his spine is broken, and he

can't live two days; Henry Pelham called on him this morning, incog., and offered him the embassy to Lisbon, &c.,—this is but a tithe of the rumours flying through the town about him. He is the newest thing up, the ruling topic of the day, the latest garbage flung for those vultures, the newsmongers, to devour. By to-morrow they will have picked him clean, and a duel or an elopement, a highway robbery or a new play, will afford them a fresher meal. I think, Sir Jasper, that we need not obtrude any longer on these gentlemen."

"Certainly. Now that all misconception is removed as to the motive of our visit, and that my equal readiness to meet them as foes or as friends is handsomely acknowledged, we need not trouble them further."

And they took their leave with majestic courtesy on the part of Sir Jasper, and friendly cordiality on the part of Mr. Gayley.

CHAPTER XVI.

RECONCILIATION.

“ANOTHER of your troubles vanished into thin air, Frank!” said Charley, as soon as our visitors had gone. “No more duels! you have relapsed into the monotony of smooth water. How very insipid! I have lost every particle of interest in your fate. All the fun is squeezed out of you. Henceforth your life is juiceless and adust. Your short day of hopes and fears, of thorns and roses, of trials and triumphs, of defeats and victories, of warm friendships and hot enmities, of blows given and received, of battles lost and won,—so brightened up by the vivid tints of bitter disappointment and mad exultation, of deep excitement and ever-varying emotions,—so replete with sensation that every minute counted as a week of existence,—that

short day, so chequered but so vivacious, which only commenced for you not many weeks ago when your troubles began, is now, my poor Frank, sinking into a long dreary night of monotonous felicity and wearisome enjoyment. Accept my condolences !”

“You dear paradox-monger ! You pretend to be sorry because the clouds that hung over me are rifted and showing the blue sky ? Away with you ! I know better. Why, you will be transferring your sympathies to the amiable Brerewood next !”

“And why not ? There are some deuced good points about him. True, he is a sheer egotist, without either honour or principle. But many high-principled men have a very blunt sense of honour, and some even object to fighting a duel. On the other hand, many men of honour are utterly devoid of principle, and think it a merit to seduce a woman. It is evident, therefore, that neither forms a complete standard of perfection. Then look at his physical vigour and mental energy, his talent, courage, tact, subtlety, and eloquence ! Who can help admiring him ? A brave man struggling with adversity is a spectacle for the gods,

whether he be morally good or bad. Believe me, Brerewood is a splendid animal!"

"So is a graceful young Bengal tiger or a fascinating boa constrictor. I, myself, prefer tamer pets. I like that Mr. Gayley, he is so genial."

"As for me, I adore that Sir Jasper, he is such a fool. I did my best to blow his bellicose ardour into a raging flame; but, confound the ninny! he mistook my irony for a serious compliment. His intense stupidity was an overmatch for my raillery. The point of my stiletto could not pierce through his thick hide, and he took the blow for a caress. By-the-bye, Frank, let me have another look at that recantation of Zillah's as to your birth."

"I have not got it, Charley. I sent it three hours ago to my uncle with an explanatory letter, and I trust it may procure me a good reception when I pay them my promised visit to-morrow."

"Don't make too sure of that. Your aunt is not only a woman, but a stiff-willed woman. She may take a wrong, and she is sure to take a strong, view. You are both of you obstinate, but your obstinacy is more passive, hers more

active. Your will refuses to bend to that of others; she goes beyond this,—she insists on others' wills bending to her own."

"She has not only me to deal with, remember. There is dear, charming Alice,—firm, faithful Alice,—lovely, loving Alice. Heaven be praised, she is obstinate, too!"

"That's right. Extol her defects! So, obstinacy is a virtue, is it? 'Tis the way with all you lovers. If she were a slattern you would call that failing a graceful disdain of finery. If she had a cast in her eye you would swear that no woman could be perfect without it."

"'Cease, rude Boreas, cease thy railing,'—you will be caught yourself some day, Charley, and then you will have to sing a palinody!"

"Who?—I? Bah! I doubt whether I shall ever come across the right woman. I have met with plenty of women that I like to look at, to talk with, to banter with, to flirt with; but not one that I should like to live with. They are either not good enough and repel me, or are too good and frighten me. Imperfection I despise; perfection I abhor. I want a mixture, but in such delicate and peculiar pro-

portions that I do not expect that the right compound will ever turn up."

"I see. What you want is beauty with a dash of deformity,—virtue with a dash of vice,—amiability with a dash of tartness,—in short, an angel with a dash of the devil! Pshaw, dear boy! If you should get thoroughly hit, the same blow will blind you to your nice distinctions, and you will yield yourself captive even though it be to a devil, with only a slight dash of the angel."

"*Absit omen!* In vain doth the caged bird whistle to the free warbler of the grove. I shall try to avoid the limed twig, woman, that hath lured thee from liberty, and is consigning thee, poor Frank, to a connubial prison."

"A fico for thy compassion, Charley! I glory in my chains! The sooner I am dragged into the matrimonial dungeon, and begin to feed on my prison fare, love and kisses, the better I shall like it. And so good-night, you amiable cynic!"

"Good-night, you cheerful victim!"

The next morning, not very early, for it was after breakfast, nor very late, for it was before Charley had come down, I threaded my way to

the dear old house in Red Lion Square. I wondered, as I went along, what my reception would be. At all events, I was reinstated into my rightful social position, and Brerewood's pretensions no longer interposed. But how far had the obstacle arising from our political disagreement been cleared off? I knew that all depended on my aunt. I was not then aware that the cause of her attendance at that meeting was her jealousy and suspicion of the ulterior views of the Catholic party. Indeed, I was puzzled to divine her motive for being present. It must have been a powerful one to induce her to adopt the male attire, a form of disguise to which I had heard her express the strongest aversion; but what was it? Had she any misgivings as to Brerewood's fidelity to the cause, and any grounds for expecting that it would there be put to the test? As to the nature of her present feelings towards that man there could be no mistake. How far would this change create a reaction in my favour? A few minutes hence the problem would be solved, and speculation about it mean time was useless and absurd; but, useless and absurd as it was, I could not refrain from racking my brain with

all manner of conjectures and fancies. The "what is"—the simple fact—would soon come within my ken; but meanwhile I kept myself busy floating, and floundering, and tossing in the shoreless ocean of the "what may be."

Old Antony opened the door to me, and the quiet chuckle with which he usually welcomed me (for had he not many and many a day carried me in his arms before I could walk?) I found expanded into a merry though equally silent grin. While taking charge of my hat and stick, he laid one hand upon my sleeve, and, approaching his lips to my ear, said in a loud, but confidential whisper, "Upstairs, sir," just as if I had never been in the house before.

"Is my aunt better, Antony?" I asked.

With a smothered laugh, as if he had been gagged, he craned up to my ear, and hoarsely murmured,—

"Better than better, sir; she 's well."

"That's right," said I; and I was going upstairs, when he stopped me by gently putting one hand on my shoulder, so as to bring his head over it, and said, with a prefatory giggle that shook his frame, but gave no

sound, "Excuse me, sir, but why not?" and then he quickly turned away to deposit my hat on its accustomed peg, as if ashamed of his unwonted demonstrativeness. I understood the good old soul. It was his way of saying, "The obstacles are removed, so why not marry Miss Alice?" and I hailed the omen.

My kind uncle had heard my voice, and he received me on the landing. With a hearty squeeze of the hand, he led me into the room, saying,—

"Ladies, allow me to introduce the undoubted heir to the house of Allerton."

The ladies received me with marked kindness; each extended a hand. I seized my aunt's with my hand of ceremony, the right, and my Alice's with the hand closest to the heart, the left, and after a gentle squeeze to each, one however more lasting and tender than the other, I bent down and pressed those welcome hands to my lips.

As I raised my head my eyes met those of Alice. They were filled with tears, which her smile proclaimed to be tears of joy. Plainly all was right, and my heart gave a great bound. Must I confess it? I never made such a fool of

myself in my life, but I really could not help it. I caught the infection from Alice's brimming eyes, and a loud unmanly sob of pleasurable emotion burst from me.

"Bless me," exclaimed my uncle, after a loud "Hem! hem!" apparently to repress a rebellious rising in his throat, "what is all this weeping and wailing about? You two seem very unhappy at this meeting. Have you quarrelled? If so, come, kiss and be friends," and he took his daughter round the waist and led her to me. Need I say it? I folded her in my arms, and before she could gently and blushing disengage herself I had indulged a fond embrace, and snatched a rapturous kiss.

"Come, children," said my aunt, "enough of ecstasies. Let us descend to realities. Since you are so obstinate about it, I suppose I must, as usual, give way and consent to your marriage."

"A thousand thanks, dear kind aunt!"

"Thank me rather, Frank, for my previous opposition. Some trials and anxieties were necessary to test, purify, and strengthen your loves. While all ran smooth, and it seemed as though you could always have each other for

the asking, you might easily have been mistaken in the nature of your mutual attachment. It might have been founded on esteem, admiration, or friendship — admirable feelings, no doubt, which have formed the basis of many not unhappy marriages, but which are no more love than pinchbeck is gold. That the feeling which you called love truly was love had to be proved by the touchstone of separation, rivalry, opposition, and other obstacles. You are now the worthier of each other, the fitter for each other, and will, I doubt not, be the happier in each other."

"Well, my dear," said my uncle, "having now quaffed the salutary cup of adversity as prescribed by you, they no doubt feel the better for it; but I am sure that they found it a nauseous draught in the drinking. It is like tooth-drawing, a mighty good thing when it is over."

"And, Frank," resumed my aunt, "you will find me inclined to be more tolerant as to our divergence in political opinions. Not that I love the base and ignoble rule of the Hanoverian usurper the more, but that I have now seen so much bigotry, selfishness, ignorance,

and craft in the opposite party that I view both with fear and mistrust. I begin to think that this Protestant country should not 'put its faith in princes,' but, under God's providence, must trust to its own vigour and manhood to shape its own destinies."

"My dear," said my uncle, with a sly smile, "you are getting quite revolutionary. Do you know that your speech savours of republicanism?"

My aunt went on without taking the slightest notice of this interruption, save by a brief pause.

"And, Frank, the usages of society make it proper that, under the circumstances, you should till—well, for the present, continue to reside with Mr. Frampton, although we shall, of course, be glad to see you here as often as you like."

I of course acquiesced, as the arrangement implied a speedy realization of my dearest hopes.

"May I then come this evening?" I asked, "to resume an old match at chess I have pending with Alice?"

"You may."

“And will you, Alice, then sing me my old favourite air of Handel, ‘Oh, had I Jubal’s lyre!’?”

“I will.”

“And now that all of you have had your say,” interposed my uncle, “let me have mine. I cannot refrain from referring to that exceedingly able but unprincipled man, Brerewood. It is instructive to notice that not only did his schemes, however cunningly devised, end in failures, but that most of them became unaccountably and curiously converted into weapons for his own destruction. For us, who acknowledge the constant supervision of the Almighty over the destinies of His creatures, the smallest as well as the largest (if there can be anything large or small in the eyes of infinity)—for us, who believe that what are called the eternal laws of nature are merely continuous emanations from the eternal will of God, it is instructive to observe how frequently our own efforts and intents turn against ourselves, and how strangely events often take a twist in our favour without any agency of our own. What influence is it that interferes to cause these turns and twists, unless it be the Divine

volition? For the words chance, fortune, fate, fatality, accident, destiny, &c., are meaningless, except as mere symbols for something real and efficient. That inspired play-actor, Shakspeare, puts it well,—

“ ‘There’s a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.’ ”

Or, as one of the old fathers has it, ‘*Σὺν Θεῷ, τὰ πάντα; ἄνευ Θεοῦ, μηδὲν.*’

“ Nor does this doctrine lead to fatalism, as some assert, since each being’s will and its operations are factors, small and feeble, it is true, but positive and effective in the sum-total of mundane events. What we infer from it is that while we should direct the efforts of our will to proper ends we must neither wonder nor repine if they should apparently fail of their mark and lead to unlooked-for and unwished-for results. I may sum it all up in the words of an old saying that I learned when young,—

‘ Let’s do our best
With cheerful zest,
And leave the rest
To God’s behest.’ ”

CHAPTER XVII. AND LAST.

A YEAR AFTERWARDS—1745.

FOUR of us were seated, one summer afternoon in 1745, under the ample shade of the grand old beech-tree that adorns the lawn in front of Allerton Manor-house. The four consisted of my uncle and aunt, Alice and myself. My uncle held a book, but did not read; my aunt had a piece of embroidery before her, but did not work; Alice had a cardboard and pencil in her hand, but did not sketch; I alone did not profess to do anything, and acted accordingly. Whether it was the strawberry feast, of which the remains were visible on the small round table that stood in the midst of us, or the warm, balmy breeze that lazily played about us, or the drowsy hum of the insects that kept cutting figures of eight in the air around us, or a feeling

that on a glorious day like this one ought to submit to passive enjoyment, and be simply content with existing, we all of us seemed to prefer thinking to talking, and each indulged in his or her peculiar train of reflections.

Meanwhile I will tell you how we came to be in that charming spot. On the happy morning of our wedding, in March (about four months before the afternoon which I am referring to), my worthy uncle took me into his little study, and, to my great astonishment and delight, presented me with the title-deeds of the Allerton estate. He explained to me how he had effected this. The rental of the property amounted to 1,600*l*. When my father died, and the guardianship devolved upon my uncle, the interest on the mortgages with which the estate was encumbered absorbed 1,450*l*. This he reduced to 1,300*l*., by substituting cheaper mortgages for the dearer ones. He found a tenant for the Manor-house, who paid a rent of 120*l*. My expenses of schooling, &c., he wholly defrayed himself, so as to devote the entire surplus of rents over interest to the gradual redemption of the mortgages.

“And so you see, Frank,” said my good old

guardian, "last year there only remained a moderate sum to pay off to free the estate altogether. Now I had put by a few thousands for my daughter's dowry, and out of that I have completed the clearance of the Allerton property."

I was profuse in my thanks, but he would hardly hear me.

"Tut, tut! it is as much for Alice as for yourself. The tenant of the Manor-house has had due notice, and will leave at Lady Day. While you and Alice are on your two months' travels, I will have the old place done up and nicely furnished, so that on your return you can take up your residence at your own place, and botanize on your own land, instead of Hampstead Heath."

And so it was that all this happiness came about. It has been settled that my uncle and aunt are to spend a good part of every summer with us in the country, and we are to spend a good part of every winter with them in town.

When at my marriage I obtained possession of the Allerton property, and it was settled that we should reside on it, I resigned my post at the War Office. It was offered to Charley,

but of course he refused it, with characteristic indignation.

“Much obliged,” he said, “I am not to be caught. It’s all in vain for you to say, ‘Charley, Charley, here is a bank-note; come and have your leg chained to a wooden stool all the days of your life!’ Thank you, no. It’s all very well to cry to a beast, ‘Dog, dog, here is a piece of tripe, come and have your collar slipped on’; but I am not a dog: or to a fish, ‘Trout, trout, here is a fly, come and be hooked’; but I am not a trout: or to a bird, ‘Lark, lark, here is a worm, come and get spitted’; but I am not a lark.”

“Certainly not a lark,” said I, “judging by your aversion to getting up of a morning. At what o’clock do you think that the lark rises?”

“At about ten to half-past. You look surprised. Nonsense! I have many a time watched a lark rising in the very middle of the day!”

What could you possibly do with such an inveterate jester? But he is a most delightful companion. I expect him down next week to spend a fortnight with us. I wish he would get married, but he is so fastidious, that he is sure at last to

make a bad choice. He is just one of that sort of fellows who end by marrying their own cooks.

Brerewood, after a long and dangerous illness, has recovered to the extent that he ever will recover. His spine is injured, and he is partially paralyzed. But his brain is as active as ever. It is said that he is now in Scotland, where the Jacobites are organizing an insurrection, and that he is one of their most active agents: How it is that they have overlooked his notorious treachery when in London I cannot say. Whether he has persuaded them that he was the victim of a calumnious imputation, or whether they have received him as a repentant sinner and condoned his offence, no one can tell, nor can any one say why he should have gone back to a party for which he had professed such contempt and hatred. Whether it be with a view of betraying them again, or whether it be from a morbid craving for excitement, one thing is certain, namely, that the only interests to which he ever will bear sincere attachment, devoted loyalty, and unswerving fidelity are the private interests of Mr. Martin Brerewood himself.

Philip Centry has retired from business. Affectionately and intelligently tended by his wife, he soon recovered from the injuries which he had sustained in his conflict with Brerewood. But it required all the ability, tact, and influence of Father Delany, who was unremitting in his attentions to his penitent, to pour comforting balm into the wounds of Philip's conscience. Until it was ascertained that Brerewood's life was out of danger (and the suspense was of three weeks' duration) he believed himself to be a murderer. True that his act was one of retribution for a foul murder committed on his sister; but that consideration only palliated, without justifying, the deed. To take away life without provocation or incentive would have been simply Satanic. As it was, he had yielded himself up to the sway of his evil passions, had stifled all sense of religion or of right, had succumbed to the savagery of the animal part of his nature, and, in a moment of blind fury, had sprung like a wild beast upon his prey with the fullest intent to perpetrate murder. To take revenge into his own hands, and with insane precipitancy to act at the same moment as judge and execu-

tioner, was a violation of the laws of both God and man.

Father Delany gradually soothed and consoled him. He prescribed, as one act of penance and atonement, that no proceedings should on Centry's part be instituted against Brerewood for the death of Zillah. Summary vengeance had anticipated and superseded the operation of the law. Two separate punishments ought not to be inflicted for the one crime; and thus it came to pass that, as the family of the deceased took no legal steps, no one intervened, and Brerewood's offence was passed over and soon forgotten.

When it became known to Philip that he was guiltless of homicide, and that Brerewood, although maimed, crippled, and disfigured, had escaped with life, remorse tempered down into simple regret, and he soon resumed the quiet performance of his duties in life.

But an event shortly occurred that gave Philip an opportunity of making the change, which he had for some time contemplated, in his mode of existence. One evening, as he was reading in the little sitting-room upstairs, Mrs. Centry came in to him, saying,—

“Philip, our old friend, Mr. Lopps, is downstairs, and wishes to see you alone.”

“Me alone? Why, my dear, it has hitherto been me alone that he has least wished to see. Do you know what he wants?”

“I do, and I have referred him to you. Can you not guess?”

“Yes, I can. But, you see, he is a Protestant.”

“We have known him several years. He is a steady, prudent, sensible, and industrious man.”

“Granted; but he is a Protestant.”

“True that his birth and position are both obscure, but he is warm-hearted, faithful, and of a most affectionate disposition.”

“I have noticed that; but, my dear, as I have said, he is a Protestant.”

“We have, in some degree, authorized his pretensions by permitting his frequent visits, and, while he doats on our Clary, she reciprocates his affection.”

“I see all that, and I really have but one objection. He is a Protestant. How is that to be got over?”

“Consult Father Delany,” said Mrs. Centry,

who, like a sensible woman, had already spoken to the priest and secured his approval, "and let us abide by his decision."

"Be it so," replied Philip, after a minute's consideration. "Send Mr. Lopps up."

Accordingly, Lopps soon made his appearance. Philip shook hands with him cordially and said,—

"What is it, Mr. Lopps, that you would like to say to me?"

"‘Would like,’ is just the right words. Put on to that, ‘and don’t know how,’ and you get the whole truth."

"Shall I tell you how, friend Lopps? Blurt out what you have to say at a jet. I have always found that the best way."

"P'raps you're right, Mr. Centry. Well, here goes! Please, sir, look here: I respeck you, I like Mrs. Centry, and I love Miss Clary. Beg pardon, sir," added Lopps, twirling his handkerchief round the middle finger of his left hand, though there was nothing in the world the matter with it.

"Beg pardon, Lopps! Nonsense! The esteem and friendship of an honest man like you is an honour to us all."

“Friendship! Thank ye, sir; but as far as Miss Clary goes I don’t want to be friends with her at all.”

“Not friends with her?”

“No, sir. If I am, as you say, to blurt it out, well, here goes: I want her to be my wife, and that’s a very different thing from being friends, you know.”

“Very different, sometimes; not always. But what you propose, my friend, is a very serious matter. I see many objections.”

“I’m glad of that, sir.”

“Glad of there being objections, Mr. Lopps?”

“Yes. If you had said ‘No’ in a lump, and stuck at that, I might have got stuck at that too. A hard, stiff ‘No’ is like a dead wall; you can only run your head agin it. But when the ‘No’ is split up into little bits, as you can deal with one at a time, why, one can make a fight. That’s why, sir!”

“I understand. My objections are not many. As to your birth, my own origin gives me no right to reproach you with being a foundling and of unknown parentage.”

“Beg pardon, sir, but that I looks upon as

‘one to me,’ as we say at cribbage. Only you think. If my father was known to be a scavenger or an exciseman, why, of course it would go hard agin me; but, as it is, where’s the man as dares come and take his ‘davy that I’m not the son of a duke? who will swear that I’m not the younger brother of Mr. Savage, with Countess Macclesfield for a mother? I might be anybody: I might be no end of persons!”

“Well, well, no more about that; nor will I lay any stress upon your pecuniary position, which is by no means brilliant.”

“True, sir, it’s not so good as some, but it’s better than others. Take a chap with six hundred a year, and spends nine; well, I’m three hundred a year better nor him; then take another six-hundred pounder, who only spends three, well, he’s three hundred a year better nor me. But put the two together and split the difference, and you’ll find as I comes about even between them; and if you put the income at double, you’ll find it comes just to the same thing, for I don’t owe nobody a brass farden.”

“Ingenious, Lopps! but not convincing. How do you propose keeping my daughter?”

“By keeping of your shop, Mr. Centry. I’ll be your waiter, ’stead of Miss Clary. Beg pardon, sir. It was all very well as long as she was a small bit of a chit, but it ain’t nice work for her now that she’s grown into the prettiest girl within a mile of Charing Cross, north, south, east, or west.”

“Well, we might get over that; but here is the most serious obstacle—difference of religion. Are you not a Protestant?”

“I a Protestant? No, sir.”

“Not a Protestant! What is your religion, then?”

“I’m a Battist.”

“A Baptist! Bah! that is the same thing. Now my daughter belongs to the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.”

“Does she really? Well, it ought to be proud of her.”

“While you belong to one of the hundred heretical sects that have strayed from the fold.”

“Well! I don’t know much about sectses, but it strikes me that it might be better for man and wife to be of different sectses, so as to give the children a chance of choosing which they’d rather be of.”

"No, Lopps! Husband and wife ought to be of the same religion."

"Ought they? P'raps you knows best. Let Miss Clary and I talk it over. Who knows? P'raps she may talk me over. I ain't proud. I don't know po'try nor painting, but to please Miss Clary I'd take lessons or anything else."

"That you have a sincere regard for my daughter, I have no doubt, but—"

"Come, Mr. Centry, let your heart melt. Think what Mrs. Centry was to you when you courted her. Such is Clary to me. One was to you, the other is to me, the hope, the joy, the pride of life! Hang it, man! the cup is near, very near to my lips; don't dash it away!"

The earnestness and emotion of the young fellow touched a responsive chord in Philip's breast. He answered gently,—

"I will think it over, friend. I will consult Father Delany. Do not ask for more at present."

Lopps saw that he had made an impression, and with instinctive tact held his peace and took his leave.

Father Delany, on being consulted by Philip, thus summed up his opinion:

“If the young man is worthy and acceptable in other respects, do not reject him merely because he does not belong to the true Church. I have the strongest objection to a Catholic man marrying a Protestant woman, but I rather encourage those marriages in which the wife is a Catholic and the husband a heretic. Experience has proved to me that, in the vast majority of cases, when their creeds differ, the husband finally adopts the religion of his wife, while the converse is of rare occurrence. Women are more earnest in their beliefs and more persevering in their efforts than men. We shall have Lopps some day seeking admission into the bosom of the Church. Meanwhile, you will of course make the usual provision that in case of children the girls are to be brought up as Catholics, and the boys as their father may decide.”

Accordingly, not very long afterwards, Clary became Mrs. Lopps, and Philip Centry retired from the business, in favour of the young couple, retaining, however, half share in the profits. Thus the house, and the business of the house, and the celebrity of the sign, devolved on Mr. and Mrs. Lopps. They

prospered, and were as happy as the day is long. As Lopps more than once said to his wife in the pride of his heart,—

“Only to think, Clary, that I should at last have ris’n to be the real Turk’s Head himself!”

Mr. and Mrs. Centry retired to a small house and garden near Dame Horrebow’s chapel behind Fetter Lane. They here became active agents in the distribution of that benevolent lady’s bounty. They also instituted a school at which, for a nominal weekly payment, they taught reading, writing, and the catechism to the younger children of their poorer Catholic neighbours, and they were soon known and beloved throughout the district for their works of charity and usefulness.

And now my story is ended. My days are spent in ease and comfort, and are utterly devoid of incidents worthy of narration. It is the inequalities of a man’s career—his adventures, his mishaps, his struggles, his defeats, his triumphs—in short, the fluctuations of his good and evil fortunes, which afford matter for instruction or amusement, just as it is the undulations of a hilly region that offer the most

charming views and the most diversified objects of contemplation. The fertile and luxuriant soil of a level country may be rich and productive, but it is sadly deficient in the picturesque and romantic. So the annals of a contented life are uneventful and uninteresting. *Truditur dies die.* The trifling grievances of a happy man sink into the merest inanities—a slight toothache,—a wet morning for an intended walk,—the saddle of mutton overdone and juiceless,—a two hours' visit from a depressing bore,—a favourite horse lame for a day or two, and such like petty troubles! That you, gentle reader, may never suffer from worse, that you may enjoy the same tranquil felicity as mine, that your afflictions may be on the same common-place scale, and that your life may prove devoid of materials for an exciting story, is the sincere prayer of

Your well-wisher,

FRANK ALLERTON.

THE END.

LONDON
PRINTED BY E. J. FRANCIS AND CO.,
TOKK'S COURT AND WINE OFFICE COURT, E.C.



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